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A Thematic Study of Doris Lessing's Children of Violence

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A THEMATIC STUDY OF DORIS LESSING'S CHILDREN OF VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

Doris Lessing's five volume series, *Children of Violence* (*Martha Quest*, *A Proper Marriage*, *A Ripple From the Storm*, *Landlocked*, *The Four-Gated City*), has the thematic intention of demonstrating the individual's relationship to the collective. Plot, character, imagery, and style--all aspects of the novels--prove this contention.

The overall plot structure of the series is dominated by the thematic intention. Martha Quest, the heroine, is dominated by the collective reality of capitalism in the first two novels. This domination is represented by her first marriage to a civil servant in Zambesia (a country in South Africa), Douglas Knowell. In the following two novels, Martha is dominated by the Communist dream, represented again by marriage, this time to a Communist enemy alien, Anton Hesse. In the final volume of the series, Martha is capable of transcending such distorting submission to collective attitudes and finally becomes herself, able to live a life in which she does not feel all split up.

Characterization in *Children of Violence* also evidences thematic intention. Martha herself is exposed to the raging forces of the collective, but she has the ability to transcend these forces and consequently stand in a new relationship to society. Virtually all the major characters of the series can be viewed in the context of their relationship to the collective. Douglas Knowell, for example, displays the self-pity and sentimentality that characterizes the fascist, racist Zambesian society. Anton Hesse has the dryness and impersonality that represents life in a collective, bureaucratic society. Martha's parents are portrayed as victims of World War I; her lover, Thomas

Stern, is a victim of the cruelty of World War II.

Imagery, also, supports the theme. The symbol of the ideal city is carried on throughout the series and accretes both individual and collective meanings. The opposite of the dream is expressed imagistically with ants. Although these two images do not exhaust the imagery in the novels, they indicate the importance of the theme.

Finally, the style of the series contributes to the thematic intention. Mrs. Lessing's point of view is mainly limited to Martha's perception of the world, but this limitation is balanced by a moral center of the novels that includes all of humanity--for the most part, still poorly fed, clothed, and housed.

The implicit attitude of Mrs. Lessing is that unless an individual can free himself from seeing only the partial view of life that any society offers to its members, he will live his life in alienation. But if an individual can go beyond the partial view society offers, he can become, through his effort of imagination, a genuine person.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The year: 1919; the place: Kermanshah, Persia. Doris Taylor Lessing was born into a world cold with the hatred and violence of World War I, the "Great Unmentionable,"[1] as her father Alfred Cook Taylor would call it. He had already lost a leg at mid-thigh and suffered through shell-shock from that war he sincerely thought would end all wars. "And he was never able to reconcile his belief in his country with his anger at the cynicism of its leaders. And the anger, the sense of betrayal, strengthened steadily as he grew old and ill."[2] Needing more room and tired of his colonial bank job, Mr. Taylor moved his wife Emily McVeagh (his nurse after the War and, as it turned out, for life) and his family to a farm in Southern Rhodesia when Doris Taylor was five.

About Africa, Mrs. Lessing says: "That is not a place to visit unless one chooses to be an exile ever afterwards from an inexplicable majestic silence lying just over the

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[1]Doris Lessing, "All Seething Underneath," Vogue (February 15, 1964), p. 80.

[2]Ibid., p. 81.

border of memory or of thought. Africa gives you the knowledge that man is a small creature, among other creatures, in a large landscape."[1]

But Southern Rhodesia also exposed Mrs. Lessing to one of man's great crimes against his fellow man: racism. Her father's native workers made the pitiable sum of twelve shillings a month[2] and lived lives of poverty and enslavement, all because white people can not make the effort of imagination necessary to see themselves in everyone. Or, as Mrs. Lessing phrases it:

> And while the cruelties of the white man towards the black man are among the heaviest counts in the indictment against humanity, colour prejudice is not our original fault, but only one aspect of the atrophy of the imagination that prevents us from seeing ourselves in every creature that breathes under the sun.[3]

Apparently school did not teach her what she felt she had to learn, for she left it forever at the age of fourteen. Since then, she held various jobs; married twice and had three children, and left for England in 1949. There, she became a member of the Communist Party, to which she had been emotionally committed since 1942,[4] but left in the late fifties. From

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[1]Preface to African Stories (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1951), p. 6.

[2]Roy Newquist, ed., Counterpoint (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1964), p. 422.

[3]African Stories, p. 6.

[4]Doris Lessing, "A Small Personal Voice," in Declaration, ed. by Tom Maschler (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1957), p. 26.

these talking shops of socialism and her wide reading, including her favorites--Balzac, Stendhal, Tolstoy--she received her real education.

The aspects of life that Mrs. Lessing writes about in her novels are all there in her background: war, racism, sexuality and marriage, left wing politics; but it would be a grave mistake to elevate this subject matter to the level of theme in any of her works because she has stated that her theme is steady and coherent. The theme of all her works, as she has stated, is her fight against putting things into compartments. "Everything is related to everything else," Mrs. Lessing has said.[1] Perhaps this awareness of man's compartmentalization comes, almost instinctively, from her early experiences with the land of Africa and its all-encompassing and uninterrupted sky. This landscape may have given her an over-all perspective of man. His individual place is a small one in a universe whose immensity we are just beginning to let seep into our tiny minds.

Apart from short stories, biographic narrative, and plays, Mrs. Lessing has written three full-length novels, not including the five novels that comprise her Children of Violence series. Her first published work, a novel, The Grass is Singing,

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[1] In an interview with Studs Terkel, May, 1969.

came out in 1950. It is a dissection of what happens to a white woman, Mary Turner, whose life on an African farm forces her into accepting quite unconsciously the white supremist ethic. Emotionally estranged from her husband and living miles from the nearest neighbors in impoverished conditions that offer little escape, Mary turns more and more frequently for companionship to her native servant, Moses, but her inability to see him as a human being turns to tragedy, ending in both their deaths. Such an inability to face life--that is, to recognize part of ourselves in all human beings--is costly. In this novel racism is viewed as a debilitating compartmentalization of the mind that takes away Mary's mind and ultimately her life, and it leaves society paralyzed with an irrational fear and paranoia. What man will refuse to face consciously will haunt his unconscious, leaving him exiled from a land of joy and freedom, man's rightful domain.

Mrs. Lessing's next novel, Retreat to Innocence (1956), deals with another kind of refusal to face life as a whole. Young Julia Barr, well placed in English society, accidentally meets Jan Brod, a Czechoslovakian Communist with a background of violence, suffering, and lifelong dedication to the Party. Julia has an opportunity through this affair to learn that life deals out to mankind more than well-fed comfort, but the harsh lessons implicit in Jan's life are too much for her.

She retreats back into her safe, narrow world and marries a young man on his way up. Of this novel Mrs. Lessing has said, "The reason why I don't like Retreat is because I think a good many very serious questions were far too easily, lightly treated."[1] Although it is flawed by a heavy didacticism that is absent from her later novels, still, Retreat to Innocence continues Mrs. Lessing's basic concern: how man cripples himself by compartmentalizing his life and refusing to see it as a whole.

The dangers of compartmentalization reach an intense crack-up in the life of Anna Wulf, who says to her friend Molly at the opening of The Golden Notebook (1965): "The point is, that as far as I can see, everything is cracking up."[2] Through an intense affair with Saul Green, an American writer, Anna goes through the depths of disintegration, but she is able at least at the novel's end to combine a number of notebooks she has written into one golden notebook and start functioning again because her daughter is returning home from school on holiday. The novel, however, does not offer a complete analysis of how man can become integrated and refuse the

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[1] In a private letter to Father Alfred Carey, March 10, 1965.

[2] Mrs. Lessing in an interview with Jonah Raskin (Jonah Raskin, "Doris Lessing at Stony Brook," New American Review, Number 8 [Signet Books: New York, 1970], p. 170) makes this point.

compartmentalization that society necessarily offers him.

It is in the series Children of Violence that this complete analysis of the ways of avoiding compartmentalization is offered. Martha Quest, female protagonist of the five-volume series, says her aim in life is not to live all split up, and the epical story of her life takes the reader through moods, masks, phases, and ideologies, each of which Martha transcends in her successful struggle to become whole.

This dissertation will devote itself to the Children of Violence series. Its main purpose will be to discuss plot, character, imagery, and style in terms of the stated theme of the series: the individual in his relation to the collective. The novels which comprise this series are Martha Quest (1952), A Proper Marriage (1954), A Ripple from the Storm (1958), Landlocked (1965), and, finally, The Four-Gated City (1969).[1]

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[1] A word about publications of the series. The publication dates listed are for the single editions brought out by the London publishing firm of Michael Joseph for the first four volumes. The first four volumes have also been brought out in a two-volume work by Simon and Schuster, published in New York. Volume one of Children of Violence (the Simon and Schuster edition) was brought out in 1964 and includes Martha Quest (I) and A Proper Marriage (II). Volume two of this edition of Children of Violence came out in 1966 and includes A Ripple from the Storm and Landlocked, III and IV, respectively. Only one hard bound edition of The Four-Gated City (V) has appeared to date. It is the Alfred A. Knopf edition, published in New York in 1969.

Because so much effort of Mrs. Lessing's has been poured into this series which has "dragged on for a couple of decades"[1] and because it comprises to date the bulk of her novelistic attempts, this series is not only central to understanding Mrs. Lessing's views, but also will have to be investigated most seriously in any future consideration of the place Mrs. Lessing will come to occupy in literature. Frederick P. W. McDowell has already made an evaluation of the Children of Violence series even before the publication of The Four-Gated City:

> All Mrs. Lessing's novels reveal her narrative abilities, her feeling for personality, her psychological acuteness, her intellectual passion, and her painstaking realism; but the Martha Quest novels, which form the Children of Violence series, have a fullness of design and conception that mark them as her most challenging works to date. As single entities the books are Mrs. Lessing's most finished and most authentic in tone; collectively, they exert an authority lacking from her other work, even from the perhaps most impassioned but somewhat disorganized The Golden Notebook.[2]

This dissertation is following in a still limited critical tradition of Mrs. Lessing's works. To date, there have been only two dissertations written about her, both of which precede the publication of her last novel, an increasing number of reviews--mostly favorable--a few critical articles,

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[1] In Author's Notes following The Four-Gated City.

[2] "The Fiction of Doris Lessing: An Interim View," Arizona Quarterly (Winter, 1965), p. 330.

and one book, Dorothy Brewster's Doris Lessing. Because the subject matters Mrs. Lessing deals with are so topical--race, Communism, man-woman relationships, the bomb--and therefore so worthy in themselves of much discussion,[1] critics have not yet investigated the very careful structure of her novels. Mrs. Lessing says that a writer should be an "architect of the soul" and, as we hope to prove, she is surely an architect of the novel as well.

It is in her article, "A Small Personal Voice," that Mrs. Lessing has stated the theme of Children of Violence "a study of the individual conscience in its relations with the collective." In the same article she also states: "There are only two choices: that we force ourselves into the effort of imagination necessary to become what we are capable of being; or that we submit to being ruled by the office boys of

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[1]For example, both of the dissertations written to date follow the scheme of themes or commitments. Father Alfred Carey in "Doris Lessing: The Search for Reality: A Study of Her Major Themes" (University of Wisconsin, 1965) discusses her themes in terms of color, politics, generational gap, man-woman relationships and the problem of the writer. Father Carey does conclude, however, that Mrs. Lessing sees reality as "a whole, a union; it cannot be split into parts, fragmented" (p. 286). Paul Schlueter in "A Study of the Major Novels of Doris Lessing" (Southern Illinois University, 1968) discusses Children of Violence in terms of Martha Quest's sexual, intellectual, dream, political, and racial commitments. Neither dissertation attempts a structural analysis of Mrs. Lessing's works.

big business, or the socialist bureaucrats who have forgotten that socialism means a desire for goodness and compassion--and the end of submission is that we blow ourselves up."[1]

These two choices are presented to the reader in Children of Violence. Martha Quest, whose search for herself comprises the central interest of the series, makes the first choice: she becomes what she is capable of being. The world in which Martha lives seems to make the opposite choice: it does not blow itself up, but, communist and capitalist alike, is over-run with chemical and biological poisons that leave large parts of the earth and its inhabitants destroyed.

The individual novels and the series itself have been carefully structured. Martha Quest is divided into four parts with each part divided again into three sections. The last four novels continue the quadruple division of parts, but each part is divided into four sections, not three. This structural division seems to have an importance to Mrs. Lessing because, when asked where the name The Four-Gated City came from, Mrs. Lessing mentioned that the number "four" was a structural division of the novels.[2]

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[1]In Declaration, ed. by Tom Maschler (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1957), p. 22, p. 17.

[2]From an interview on the Studs Terkel Show, taped in May, 1969.

The individual relation to the collective is the structural foundation of the series.

In Martha Quest the young Martha, living on a farm in Zambesia,[1] submits to being ruled by her parents. They are British colonials who have accepted the stereotyped and repressive attitudes toward the kaffirs common among the white ruling class of Zambesia. Although with adolescent bravado Martha has intellectually denounced prejudice of all kinds, she can only argue uselessly against her parents, rage privately, and live according to the standards she despises. However, she finally works up enough courage to leave the farm and go into the city to work. She perceives this move as a liberation which will free her forever from the shackling influence of her family. The town life, however, proves to be merely a variation of, rather than an escape from, the repression she cannot tolerate. She falls in with the young crowd from the Sports Club, has an affair, and discovers that prejudice exists in town, too. Near the end of the novel, Martha meets Douglas Knowell whose reading of the New Statesman and belief that the governmental policy toward the kaffirs

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[1]In the "Author's Notes" that follow The Four-Gated City, Mrs. Lessing states: "I used the name 'Zambesia' for the white-dominated colony described in this series because I did not want it to be thought that what I described was peculiar to Southern Rhodesia. My Zambesia is a composite of various white-dominated parts of Africa. . . ."

is not particularly enlightened encourage Martha to think that marriage to him will be some kind of escape from the repressive life. In spite of misgivings, the ubiquity of the coming war pushes her into marriage.

A Proper Marriage examines in detail the individual and collective life as it is lived under the continuing domination of "the office boys of capitalism," for Douglas turns out to be nothing more than a civil servant whose enlightened attitudes are easily repressed in order to earn a living. The submission that Martha accepts in her personal life is an unwilling acquiescence in a pregnancy resulting in the birth of a daughter Caroline. That commencement of a family leads to consequences that Martha vowed she would escape: a house, servants, and a meaningless existence as a middle-class married woman. Martha knows that if she has another child, she will be forced to remain with Douglas and live out her life as an unhappy, unfulfilled, and neurotic woman becoming increasingly like her despised mother. But no alternative presents itself until the Battle of Stalingrad in 1942. The political climate in Zambesia changes sufficiently to let Communist groups sell literature, and, after a night of reading, Martha becomes converted. Armed with her new idealism, she is strong enough to break the chains of submission to the office boys of capitalism and to walk out on her husband and child.

To summarize briefly the individual relationship to the collective, as Martha Quest has lived it in these two volumes, we can say that the social controls that have exerted their influence on Martha pervaded the entire fabric of her life. Her parents tried to instil her with racist feelings towards the natives and with a narrow-minded view of sexuality. The people in town pressured her to give up her Jewish lover and marry. Her doctor enforced existing social attitudes by refusing to tell her she was pregnant until it was too late to have an abortion. Friends of Douglas's tried to convince her that unhappiness in marriage is normal for a woman, and this unhappiness should be tolerated as a burden life places on everyone. The newspapers demanded that she be in favor of war even before anyone knew what side Britain would be on. There existed, too, a conspiracy of silence which did not let her read about Communism or imagine that an alternative life style was possible for her.

And the interpersonal relationships within this society reflect the crippling thraldom of this society at large. The paternalism that whites feel for blacks creates a sickening self-pity within the white man that also characterizes many of the marital relationships in the first two volumes. This self-pity has a mirror side of sentimentality manifesting itself on a political level in a guilt-reducing paternalism

of benevolent charity and in interpersonal relationships by unrealistic sacrifices that lead to profound unhappiness and neuroticism.

Volumes three and four examine Martha's communistic enslavement. In A Ripple from the Storm Martha lives a life fed on the high, intoxicating, but impractical idealism of Communism with its beautiful dream of a glorious future. The energy supplied from this dream and the rather relaxed attitude in Zambesia toward Communism resulting from the accident of having the Soviet Union as an ally pushes Martha into a frenzy of activity: committee work, group meetings, fund raising, propaganda pushing. In her private life she marries Anton Hesse, member of the Party and resident enemy alien, not out of love, but for legal reasons and the good of the cause. This dry, loveless marriage to a man for whom a personal talk turns into an "item on the agenda,"[1] serves as a perfect reflection of the reality of the individual life clouded by the dream of a great tomorrow. Once again, Martha finds herself in an unhappy marriage. On the political level, the group squabble among themselves and lose members. Then they join forces with the Labour Party to fight for allowing

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[1]III, 58. Throughout this dissertation, the practice will be to refer to each of the five novels by the appropriate roman numerals, and the pagination will refer to the two-volume Simon and Schuster edition for the first four novels and the Knopf edition for the fifth.

the disenfranchised natives into the Party. The novel ends with the Labour Party hopelessly split.

In Landlocked Martha's personal and political life are both adrift. She knows the marriage to Anton will not last and feels that she is conducting a holding operation, trying to keep together the fragments of her life and the fragments of her various selves. During this period she has an affair with Thomas Stern, an affair that proves most important for her in learning to become herself. Rather than remaining a dry, self-contained person cut off from herself, Martha has her capacity for feeling opened up. Politically, Thomas's horror of the War, resulting in his revenge on a British officer in Israel and his own senseless death on a native Resevoir, teaches Martha that the devastation of the War will not disappear at the signing of a peace treaty. But out of this violence have come twisted and warped people who ironically become what the world needs to survive. On a local level, the shift in popular opinion turns on the heat for the activists, and the political ineffectiveness of the white activists, trying in a Kafkaesque way to make contact with native leaders, only reinforces in a concrete way the lesson Martha is slowly learning from Thomas Stern: conscious political effort is no longer what the world stands most in need of.

Although Martha's submission in these two novels is

not to the majority government and culture, the submission is there, but in another form. She sees a hungry and uneducated kaffir in the streets and only dreams of the day when such hunger will no longer exist. A friend of hers tries to tell her the truth about Stalinism, but she thinks he is giving her capitalist propaganda. And, finally, the efforts of the group destroy the only possible, workable alternative to a vicious nationalistic government.[1] The submission is to a dream that denies reality and sublimates genuine problems, rather than solves them. Purity of ideology replaces the art of the possible as a political premise.

On the individual level, the interpersonal relationships are characterized by a stuffy, correct, and disapproving dryness, most noticeable in Anton. When a friend of Martha's, for example, gets pregnant, Anton does not regard this problem as part of the group's concern. One of the members in a burst of vehemence calls him nothing but a bureaucrat and the epithet is devastatingly accurate. Ideologues make notoriously poor friends and human beings.

The first four novels can be categorized as an analysis of submission. Paradoxically, submission to the capitalist

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[1] In Going Home Mrs. Lessing explains that the so-called liberal "partnership government" of Rhodesia is, in reality, just as repressive as the policy of apartheid in the Union of South Africa, only more dishonest.

society forces an individual into regarding his unhappy state as merely idiosyncratic and not institutional, while submission to the communist dream (within a Western society) forces one into acceptance of a belief that all problems are institutional and none are personal. Thus, while Martha accepted the capitalist belief, she felt that she was the one who had to adjust, which she did by smothering her belief in mankind, noble but betrayed, with a cynicism and a sense of futility about ever changing her situation. When she becomes a Communist, she believed that only the political and economic structures had to be changed for man to realize happiness. Her affair with Thomas Stern opened her to deeper realities of life than she had before imagined.

In the final novel, The Four-Gated City, Martha arrives in London and pursues her life to its self-predicted end. Searching for herself amid rising concern over the bomb, Martha spends her time acting as secretary to Mark Coldridge, writer. Her duties gradually include another holding operation, this time of the old Coldridge house, and caring for his "crazy" wife Lynda, their son Francis, and Mark's nephew, Paul. The reader becomes aware that these personalities--and the others in the novel--are not merely themselves but also manifestations of Martha's many-sided personality: her emotions, her politics, her masks, her past and future. Martha's

learning from each of these characters brings to her an essential self-knowledge, which is also furthered by a visit from her mother. The panic she is thrown into over her mother's arrival makes her realize that as a girl she had to fight her mother with anger, refusing to this dreadfully unhappy and therefore dishonest creature any sympathy or pity. Now, as an adult, Martha realizes that she must face this pain or be cut off from her past. This inward journey, whereby she gets her memory back, frees her and brings unexpected gains.

She begins having predictive dreams and hearing what other people are thinking. Together with Lynda, the two women work to develop these powers. In the most intense section in the series, Lynda has a "funny spell," and Martha learns what it is Lynda is trying to do--get outside her own mind and into the impersonal mind which seems to exist independently of any individual. Martha leaves the house for three months and spends the time examining her own mind. Almost conquered by waves of hatred and self-hatred, Martha struggles until the last wave of self-hatred subsides, when she is said to know her own mind.

Out of this hard fought-for achievement, Martha enters into a new relationship with the collective: she learns to foretell the future. Because she can see that large doses of chemicals will be unleashed upon England, she and others like

her, apparently those who have also become what they are capable of being, are able to escape. The Appendix, however, where the disaster occurs, plunges everyone into a revamped, more fascistic society than the world has known to date. Inside that society, however, are young children with extraordinary powers who may one day be able to save the enslaved totalitarian society they live secreted within. The fifth novel ends with a letter from Martha predicting her death, and with Joseph Batts, one of the extraordinary children, being allowed to become a gardener in the new, tightly restricted society. The series ends neither optimistically or pessimistically, but with the present choice confronting man expressed by Mrs. Lessing's stated theme heightened into definite polarities.

We have examined in brief outline the over-all structure of the series. In the chapters that follow, we will examine in detail the structural development of the series in relation to the theme, character, imagery, and style.

CHAPTER II

STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE THEME

Martha Quest

Martha Quest begins with an epigraph from Olive Schreiner: "I am so tired of it, and also tired of the future before it comes."[1] This remark characterizes adolescent Martha's temper. She remains on the veld with her family throughout part one, but does not really want to be there. She is tired of life and the future because she is fighting herself so destructively.

Section one opens with Martha's British mother entertaining her Afrikaan neighbor, Mrs. Van Rensberg, while fifteen-year-old Martha plays the role of "'young girl' against their own familiar roles." Their advice to Martha about men not respecting girls who are not "nice," their discussions of cooking and servants, and the dishonesty between the two who both feel superior to the other, all serve to disgust Martha. She leaves them and goes off by herself, thinking about what she knows about herself from her reading of books supplied to her by the Cohen brothers, whom she would like to visit but

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[1] I, 11.

will not disobey her parents to do so. That part of her who is called the "detached observer"[1] wonders why she has to live through this trying adolescence if it has already been given a name. Martha then tries to imagine what kind of a heroine she would like to become, but her reading gives her no clues. After looking at a passing native child, with the sympathy she denies herself Martha is moved into her favorite daydream of a beautiful city where black and white play together.

The section moves forward a year to Martha's first rebellion. It is against the childish clothes the puritanical Mrs. Quest insists on for Martha. In contrast to Martha's dream city, this quarrel presents the reader with the reality of the Quest household. Hypochondriacal Mr. Quest, emotionally crippled from World War I, can not make a success of farming, and Mrs. Quest continually blames the ruinous state of the house, the failing farm, and Martha's conduct on anything but the real reasons. Except for a mutual and deprecating self-pity, the senior Quests share nothing but memories of the War. It is against the unreality of the Quests' lives that Martha is really rebelling, while taking her first step toward becoming herself.

The first section introduces a number of the major ideas that underlie the theme of the series. Martha is

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[1] I, 12, 18.

portrayed as playing her first role, that of young girl. Before her life ends, she will play many others. The "detached observer" that watches Martha living through these roles and phases is already at work and will grow stronger. And the dream she has of the fair city, her metaphorical equivalent of what it is she wants to become, is already tied into some kind of collective perfection that excludes racism. She herself, however, is already influenced by the violence that has twisted her parents who are in the process of twisting her.

Section two introduces another major idea of the Children of Violence series: man's individual relationship to the collective is one which forced him to compartmentalize his knowledge and not relate one truth to another. He lives a fragmented, alienated, and dishonest life with terrifying collective consequences. On the individual side of her life, Martha is feeling the adolescent tension between rising sexual feelings and a need to repress them, between a deep awareness that her conduct does not accord with her thoughts and a fear of confronting herself with the truth. For example, Martha loses weight, makes new clothes for herself, and tries to be attractive, but when she starts visiting the Cohens again (she stopped because Mrs. Van Rensberg's daughter Marnie said Joss Cohen was sweet on her), she does not want them to

notice her new appearance. Also, she did not take the matric examination for a university scholarship because, ostensibly, of a case of pink eye. But she stays on the veld reading for hours a day, stubbornly shutting out all thoughts of school and scholarship.

This interior alienation or blind refusal to reconcile all separately compartmented thoughts is parallelled on the collective level. In private, the Van Rensbergs can be friends with the Quests, but in public and surrounded by Afrikaaners, they are embarrassed when Martha comes over to say hello. Also, for no conscious reason, the Afrikaaners come to the station for their mail on days when the British will not be there, but they themselves do not know why. They appear to be open, honest, and simple farm people, above fear, but in their eyes is "a pale and fretful look; the soft and luminous darkness that should lie behind the iris is simply not there. Something is missing." Martha, too, is caught up in the collective deception. Although she tells Joss she has no prejudices, "she could not remember a time when she had not thought of people in terms of groups, nations, or colour of skin first, and as people afterwards." And, under the hot African sun on a land peopled by various groups and colors, the refusal to be whole and to accept each other as individuals manifests itself in a monstrous, collective sickness of alienation. "And each

group, community, clan, colour, strove and fought away from the other, in a sickness of dissolution . . . like a band of explorers lost in a desert, quarrelling in an ecstasy of fear over their direction, when nothing but sober mutual trust could save them. Martha could feel the striving forces in her own substance; the effort of imagination needed to destroy the words black, white, nation, race, exhausted her."[1]

Because individuals can not make the effort of imagination necessary to destroy the false barriers they have placed between themselves and others and between levels of consciousness within themselves, the monster fear will create a panic which will destroy us all.

Within this same section, however, Martha has an experience of a completely opposite nature. While she is coming home from the station, she has an illumination, and for a little while, she feels herself to be whole and a part of the world, not separate and misunderstood, divided from the people around her and divided within. She feels a part of that soft and luminous darkness that should exist behind the iris of the eyes.

The final section of part one presents Martha with another chance to rebel, when she accepts an invitation to a dance at the Van Rensbergs. Mrs. Quest is upset with her

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[1]I, 59, 57, 57.

going, but Martha leaves the house, in spite of objections, in a white dress which makes her feel "not so much herself as a creature buoyed on something that flooded into her as a knowledge that she was moving inescapably through an ancient role, she must leave her parents who destroyed her. . . ." Throughout the dance, Martha's imagination turns the event into something it is not, Marnie's brother Billy into a man he is not. She can not see the reality of the event, only an "illusory haze."[1] She does some awkward kissing with Billy and some awkward answering of Mr. Van Rensberg's questions on relations between English and Dutch. The kissing and the vague political answers are in direct relation to each other: both vague and uncertain, performed by the compulsion of the role she is playing.

After the dance, Martha "felt as if a phase of her life had ended, and that now a new one should begin." A new possibility is created in the form of a letter from Joss Cohen saying his uncle in town would give her a job. The following morning, and at the end of part one of Martha Quest, Martha leaves for town: "And a door had closed, finally; and behind it was the farm, and the girl who had been created by it. It no longer concerned her. Finished. She could forget it. She was a new person, and an extraordinary, magnificent, and altogether new life was beginning."[2]

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[1] I, 80, 84.

[2] I, 89, 90.

There is, of course, a tremendous irony in these final words of part one which can be seen clearly in the context of the whole Children of Violence series, for forgetting the past or being relieved of its burden as it weighs upon one's thoughts and actions is far from being the simple task the young Martha perceives it. The later half of Martha's life, recounted in The Four-Gated City, is spent forcing herself to recall the past in order to be rid of it. Just as there is a tendency for Martha to compartmentalize thoughts that are too disturbing to handle in relationship to other thoughts--like her disavowal of prejudice and the constant prejudiced judgments she makes--so too, she assumes that one part of her life can be cut off from another. She accepts the ancient myth that a change of scene will create a new personality.

Part two opens with the epigraph by Baron Corvo: "The worst of a woman is that she expects you to make love to her, or to pretend to make love to her."[1] This remark applies to Donovan Anderson, Martha's first boy-friend in town, one too effeminate to make even the mildest of advances.

In section one, Martha is introduced to the office routine under the tutelage of the very kind-hearted Mr. Cohen who even apologizes for forgetting that she might need money since she is newly arrived in town. Mr. Cohen's kind-heartedness gives Martha another glimpse into her compartmentalized thinking,

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[1] I, 91.

for she learns that the black office boy makes the unheard-of salary of five pounds a month. Her liberal heart is gratified, but her conventional upbringing is shocked at a native receiving such a munificent sum, still seven pounds ten shillings less than she earns.

In section two, Martha signs up for typing and shorthand classes at the Polytechnic but misses the first class because she has a date with Donovan Anderson. Martha, quite unconsciously, assumes a new role, the girl about town. While she dresses for her date she does so "under the power of that compulsion that seemed to come from outside," and when Donovan appears, she presents herself to him "still in the power of that outside necessity." When he takes her home to meet his mother, "Martha was adapting herself to Donovan according to that outside pressure which said she must; and yet this pliability was possible only because something was still informing her, in a small voice but a clear one, that this had nothing to do with her. . . ."[1] That small, clear voice is the detached observer who thought about her adolescence on the veld but who does not have the strength to break the role that Martha is now playing. Because Martha is not yet a person, she falls quite easily under Donovan's influence and the compulsion rooted in societal mores, so before the evening is over, she settles down to be his girl-friend.

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[1]I, 108, 108, 109.

Mrs. Quest comes to town in section three and interferes in Martha's life in two ways. Martha had been to a meeting of the Left Book Club, invited to come by Jasmine Cohen, Joss's cousin, and Martha had just decided to get to know her better. Because Mrs. Quest arrives and disturbs the office looking for Martha, Martha cancels her plans to get to know Jasmine better. Apart from shifting her newspaper to the New Statesman, Martha has removed from her life all leftist influence. Later that day, Mrs. Anderson tells Martha and Donovan that Mrs. Quest was talking about marriage for the two young people. This conversation emboldens Martha to make a mild pass at Donovan and she realizes that he is only like a brother to her. Donovan claims spitefully that all women are "oversexed."[1] Although Martha will continue to date Donovan, she is now free to break from his influence and look for another role to fall into.

The epigraph of part three is taken from Proust: "In the lives of most women everything, even the greatest sorrow, resolves itself into a question of 'trying on.'"[2] This epigraph, like the preceding, indicates the nature of Martha's next important romance with a young Jew whose social unacceptability, his own hostility, and Martha's uncertainty end their affair with a collective snub. There is truth in

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[1] I, 139.

[2] I, 140.

characterizing this affair on Martha's part as a "trying on" of a new role.

It is within the collective atmosphere of the Sports Club that Martha has her affair with her first lover, Adolph King. The Club is primarily for the white single people of the town and its importance is so great that Mrs. Lessing devotes the first section of part three to a history of the place. About its atmosphere, she is quite specific.

> The public: it was all so public, anything was permissible, the romances, the flirtations, the quarrels, provided they were shared. These terms, however, were never used, for words are dangerous, and there was a kind of instinctive shrinking, an embarrassment, against words of emotion, or rather, words belonging to that older culture, to which this was an attempt at providing a successor.
>
> If two young men were seen in angry argument, Binkie [Maynard, son of Mr. Maynard the magistrate, the spiritual center of the club] or one of the older members would hastily go to them, saying sentimentally, "Break it up, old man, break it up, kids," and the contestants would be led back to the flock, smiling apologetically, smiling if it killed them. When a couple remained too long together, dated each other too often, half a dozen self-appointed guardians of public safety would watch them, and at last surround them, with "hey, hey, what's this?"
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> . . . . . .
>
> This system of shared emotion might have been designed to prevent marriage; but if by chance a couple managed to evade Binkie's vigilance and the group jealousy, and presented themselves as engaged, they would be received with a groan of protest; it was felt, deeply, as a betrayal; and if they braved it out, shaking their heads smilingly at Binkie's private warnings that "Man, your work'll suffer," and "You don't want to tie yourself down to kids at your age, baby," then the group, like one of those jellylike spores which live by absorption, swelled out and surrounded the couple, swallowing the marriage whole.[1]

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[1] I, 147-418.

This life of adolescent, inchoate, and irresponsible emotionality cast within the racist, fascist setting of white colonialism will dominate not only this novel, but the next. Through Martha's experiences, the reader is given an intimate portrayal of this kind of collective, as it acts as a body and as its members act individually, with the "sentimentality" alluded to becoming more and more a key of its emotional center on both levels.

In section two, Donovan takes Martha to a Sports Club Dance, where she meets Perry and the Mathewses, Stella and Andrew. By the end of the evening, Perry takes Martha to the door and kisses her goodnight, "from which she now knew she was Perry's girl and not Donovan's." But during the evening, Martha had tried to be more personal with Perry and make him accept her as herself "whatever that might mean; for was she not continually at sea, because of the different selves which insisted on claiming possession of her?" Although Martha is confused over who she is as she shifts from role to role, man to man, she senses that there is a "veiled personage that waits, imprisoned in every woman, to be released by love, that person she feels to be (obstinately and against the evidence of all experience) what is real and enduring in her."[1] Her multiple personalities, compartmentalized within her and

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[1]I, 174-175, 166, 167.

evoked by different situations, indicate by their range that she is not yet herself, but that a man who would love her might release her real self from under the camouflage.

The following morning Martha realizes that the evening had been banal and that she was bored, but yet she knew she would go again the following night for the same round of empty pleasure. "She was, in fact, suffering from the form of moral exhaustion which is caused by seeing a great many facts without knowing the cause for them, by seeing oneself as an isolated person without origin or destination. But since the very condition of her revolt, her very existence, had been her driving individualism, what could she do now?"[1] What Martha can not realize is that the banality and boredom of this individual life she is leading relates directly to the collective life it represents and is part of. She thinks of calling Jasmine Cohen and rejoining the Left Book Club, but this kind of offhand political activity, seen without the context of the Communist Party and its demand for a total dedication, strikes her as anticlimactical. She looks out of the window and watches a file of men go by.

> First, two policemen, in their boots, their crisp khaki tunics belted tight, their buttons shining, their little hats cocked at an angle. Then perhaps twenty black men and women, in various clothing, barefooted and shabby. Then, following these, two more policemen. The

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[1] I, 175.

> prisoners were handcuffed together, and it was these hands that caught Martha's attention: the working hands, clasped together by broad and gleaming steel, held carefully at waist level, steady against the natural movement of swinging arms--the tender dark flesh cautious against the bite of metal. These people were being taken to the magistrate for being caught after curfew, or forgetting to carry one of the passes which were obligatory, or--but there were a dozen reasons, each as flimsy. Now, Martha had seen this sight so often that she was not dulled to it so much as patiently angry. She marched, in imagination, down the street, one of the file, feeling the oppression of a police state as if it were heavy on her; and at the same time was conscious of the same moral exhaustion which had settled on her earlier.[1]

The connection she can not make at this time is the relationship between the "oppression of a police state" and the "banality" of the evening before. Consequently, as we have seen her already reflect, she feels isolated, deprived of something life had not offered her, and incapable of putting together all the facts into a causal pattern. Simultaneously, she knows she will continue the Sports Club life.

In section three, Martha and Perry quarrel over his boyish and prurient attempt to make love. As a kind of protest, feeble at best, against the Sports Club, Martha has an affair with a Jew, Adolph King, an orchestra player at the Club. The Club does not approve and makes its disapproval felt, but Martha persists, even though she gets the uneasy feeling that "Dolly" is using her. The result of this first, and truly

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[1] I, 176.

meaningless affair, is a confrontation scene that Stella Mathews arranges to relieve her own feelings. Stella, a Jewess, who has assimilated herself into the Sports Club culture by marrying a white gentile, turns on Dolly because what he is doing with Martha gives a bad name to all Jews. Stella tells Adolph this to his face in the presence of Martha, Donovan, and Andrew. Martha, the avowed defender of all races and creeds, is too enfeebled to make any retort. She breaks off with Adolph and continues to see Stella, although she has promised herself she never would again. Part three ends with Martha in her room after the final confrontation scene, "so ashamed she could hardly bear her own company."[1]

The anti-Semitism of the Sports Club group in this private affaire de coeur of Martha's can easily be seen in the collective context of the Nazi policy against the Jews, just as the treatment of the Jews on board ship in Katherine Ann Porter's Ship of Fools becomes a microcosmic examination of German prejudice that led to Auschwitz. Mrs. Lessing makes her theme clear again and again. Private feelings in the twentieth century have a clear and frightening significance. Because Martha is not yet an individual, she is open to the worst kinds of collective pressures which she, as yet, has no strength to ward off.

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[1] I, 205.

Part four becomes more consciously collective than the preceding parts because of the imminence of war. The epigraph, a verse from Edwin Muir, is "For the great tragedy about to start."[1] In Zambesia war fever creates among the young a *je m'en fou* attitude bordering on the hysterical. Martha, affected like many of the young girls, succumbs to this fever and marries.

Section one of part four finds Martha back at the Sports Club again watching Perry do his usual imitation of an American Negro banjo player. But with the war playing on everyone's nerves, Perry pushes his act further and parodies an African native dancing to "hold him *down*, the Zulu warrior, hold him *down*, the Zulu chief." Then he calls on a helpless and frightened native waiter to war dance. The waiter goes through a few motions to pacify Perry's rising temper and escapes as quickly as possible, before the scene gets nastier, "And the white people were left unaccountably bad-tempered, and rather sorry for themselves."[2] Self-pity, the individual emotion, is linked here to the collective monstrosity of racism. Martha is so disgusted that she vows again, this time quite firmly, to have nothing to do with the Sports Club.

And section two follows Martha's attempts to find a new kind of life for herself. She tries to get more interesting

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[1] I, 206.

[2] I, 216, 217.

jobs, but the fact that she is a woman holds her back. She decides to be a writer, but one rejection slip later, she gives up the idea. Finally, it is an enraging letter from Martha's mother, replete with awful advice and paranoid racist remarks, that throws Martha off her search for a way out of the Sports Club life and back into it. "After half an hour of violent anger, a feeling of being caged and imprisoned, she went to the telephone, rang the Sports Club, asked for Perry, and told him she would be delighted to help entertain the visiting cricketers tomorrow."[1]

In section three, Martha goes to the Sports Club with Perry and meets Douglas Knowell, "which inevitably became Know-all."[2] Douglas seems to be different from the other fellows in the Club; he invites her to tea, he is older, and, finally, what confirms Martha in this desperate attempt to see him as different, he reads the New Statesman and thinks the government policy toward kaffirs is not enlightened. Martha is so pleased she lapses into silence and a feeling that she is coming home. Martha feels that at last she has found somebody with whom she can have some genuine communication. But even during the courtship, Martha has doubts that she must talk down: "Martha told herself fiercely that he was

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[1] I, 223.

[2] I, 225. Mrs. Lessing's first husband was named Wisdom.

a man, at least, and not a silly little boy. And so intelligent too!"[1]

The courtship is a short and whirlwind affair. Three times[2] during their engagement, Martha thinks of telling Douglas she can not marry him after all, but rounds of parties and drinks interrupt. But, again, it is Mrs. Quest who determines Martha on marriage. One morning after a party,

> Martha woke with the feeling of a prisoner before execution, and said to herself that she would ring him up and say that she could not possibly marry him.
>
> When she got up, there was a letter from her mother, ten pages of every sort of abuse, in which the phrases "you young people" "the younger generation," "free-thinkers," "Fabian sentimentalists," and words like "immoral," were repeated in every sentence.[3]

Martha's anger at her mother is what carries her into a marriage which a small voice (that detached observer, again) inside is telling her will end in divorce. She also thinks that, just as moving to town was an escape from the farm and family, the marriage to Douglas would be an escape from her single life in town. Martha and Douglas marry before Judge Maynard on the day Hitler marches into Bohemia and Moravia.

The thematic implications of the plot structure in Martha Quest should now be clear. Born into a repressive society and instinctively fighting the unreality of her

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[1] I, 228.

[2] I, 234, 237, 239.

[3] I, 239.

parents' relationship, their dehumanizing attitudes toward the natives and other non-British, non-Christian white neighbors, Martha begins her long rebellion. Her intimations from the veld give her a sense that life need not be lived the way her family is living, so she senses herself as an exile from something signified by her dream of the four-gated city. Her rebellion and growth finally take her to the city where she thinks she will be free, but her own inability to live the way she thinks and the continuing repressiveness of the society, represented by the Sports Club, keep her from becoming who she is capable of being. Thinking that she is escaping repression, she jumps into a marriage with Douglas Knowell, a social contract that part of her knows is doomed from the start.

A Proper Marriage

A Proper Marriage begins immediately after Martha's honeymoon spent en masse with the Mathewses and Binkie Maynard and the Sports Club boys, and it ends a few years later when Martha walks out on Douglas. What dominates the novel is what dominates bourgeois life: the monster repetition. Douglas says to Martha in part one when she is complaining to him of her mother, "You'll be just as bad at her age."[1] This monster flourishes within Martha because of a lethargy that keeps her

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[1] I, 293.

from leaving Douglas and because her unexpected pregnancy and the birth of a daughter Caroline.

The monster of repetition has both individual and collective ramifications and reminds us of the way Simone de Beauvoir in The Second Sex talks about the life of the married woman. She is not promised love, but happiness

> which means the ideal of quiet equilibrium in a life of immanence and repetition. In certain periods of prosperity and security this has been the idea of the middle class as a whole and especially of landed proprietors; their aim has been not the conquest of the future and of the world but the peaceful conservation of the past, the maintenance of the status quo. A gilded mediocrity lacking ambition and passion, aimless days indefinitely repeated, life that slips away gently toward death without questioning its purpose--this is what they meant by "happiness."

Martha is caught up collectively in a society without transcendence; that is, in a society that is not looking to build a better future for itself, for that would entail facing the race problem directly. White Zambesian society is content to repeat the past patterns of collective living and be satisfied with the easy material satisfactions that a ruling class can afford when such luxuries are wrung from the earth by the labor of others.

And marriage within this society, especially for a woman, is particularly repetitious and purposeless. For, while the man can escape to some illusion of transcendence at the

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[1] (Bantam Books: New York, 1961), pp. 421-422.

office, the woman at home doing nothing but housework has a task which, by its nature, is chained to repetition. Miss de Beavoir says:

> Any doctrine of transcendence and liberty subordinates the defeat of evil to progress toward the good. But woman is not called upon to build a better world: her domain is fixed and she has only to keep up the never ending struggle against the evil principles that creep into it; in her war against dust, stains, mud, and dirt she is fighting sin, wrestling with Satan.[1]

Martha, savage fighter for individualism, finds herself now trapped both collectively and individually in a life whose goals demand sacrificing thoughts of liberty before the sterile household gods of security and satisfied self-pity.

Martha struggles to create for herself a personality that is proper to a young married woman, a "Matty who makes such a success of marriage but who has nothing to do with the real Martha," but the epigraph to part one expresses the value of such an attempt. It is from Lewis Carroll's Alice: "You shouldn't make jokes if it makes you so unhappy."[2]

In section one the monster repetition is set up in the imagery of a ferris wheel which was erected across from the apartment the newly married Knowells move into. Its endless circling symbolizes the kind of meaningless, repetitive life Martha has gotten herself into with her bourgeois marriage. Two ways out of facing up to this meaninglessness are a hard

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[1] Ibid., pp. 425-426. [2] II, 296, 261.

cynicism represented by Mr. Maynard or a childish sentimentality represented by Douglas Knowell. Martha, alternately cynical and sentimental, becomes entrapped exactly the way her mother was trapped: she gets pregnant during a war with a child she does not want.

In section one, Martha and her friends spend some time talking in a sophisticated way about contraception and abortion --the ways to avoid pregnancy. Stella drags Matty (a nickname used more frequently in this novel than in the previous one; it represents her social, and false, persona) to see Dr. Stern for a chat on birth control and her "love life," a phrase Martha detests because it makes her feel that this part of her life is separated from herself. His suavity turns the appointment into a bourgeois acculturation process for Martha. All women are unhappy during the early times of their marriage; all women want to regulate birth; all women are touchy and need special handling by their husbands. After the appointment, Dr. Stern cynically indicates to his nurse that Martha will probably be pregnant in no time at all.

In section two a "savage and destructive"[1] way of thinking is paralleled on two different levels of society. First, Martha goes to visit Solly Cohen living in a community

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[1] II, 315.

in the Coloured Quarters.[1] His leftist, cynical analysis of the international situation is coupled with an inability to take anything seriously. Later that day, Martha and Douglas go to a sundowner party where she has a long conversation with Mr. Maynard, a victim of disillusionment from that War that supposedly made the world safe for democracy. Although he is on the opposite side of the collective from Solly, his political views are equally savage, arguing that a pack of knaves rules a pack of fools and that plus ça change, plus qui la même chose. Mr. Maynard's advice for the evening to Martha is that life will be more tolerable for her if she learns to hide what she is really feeling, if she simply must feel strongly on issues. Martha is enraged by the advice, but when she and Douglas leave the party, she does not tell him precisely how she feels about Mrs. Bradshaw's proposed charity group. (Charity in this context seems to be aligned with a kind of sentimentality; an inability to face up to the questions of social justice, like a living wage for the natives, or social equality in housing, education, rights of citizenship; but charity does serve to smooth over the consciences of the sentimental women who want to "help" the natives in a maternal way.) Douglas says, "'It's not such a bad idea, you know.'

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[1]Coloured Quarters is the section where the Indians, not the black natives, live.

He was referring to her being 'in' with the Bradshaws."[1]

Even though Martha finds Mr. Maynard's advice of hiding feelings to be intolerable, a certain pity for Douglas forces her to do precisely that. Once again, pity warps truth in the same way that the pity whites feel for blacks hides the truth of white complicity in racism. She urges they go dancing. "There was something in the talk with Mr. Maynard which had unsettled her, made her restless--she needed to dance. Besides, she was instinctively reluctant to go now, in this mood of disliking him, which she did unaccountably, to spend an evening with Douglas."[2]

This section, then, outlines carefully the emotional construct of Zambesian society. On the one hand, there is the Maynard brand of cynicism that excuses the party from any responsibility for upholding the thoroughly corrupt system of racial prejudice. Mr. Maynard can continue to uphold the Zambesian law with a clear conscience because he has convinced himself that nothing can be done about the situation, anyway. His fine intelligence and critical powers of observation are channeled into an urbane cynicism that makes for delightful cocktail party talk, but little more. Solly Cohen is his twin with the only difference between them one of political viewpoints: on an emotional level, they are identical. On the other hand,

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[1]II, 319. [2]II, 320.

the sentimentality of the Mrs. Bradshaws of the colony blinds these ladies to their participation in the existing order and forces them into leading dishonest lives, both individually and collectively.

In section three the idea of fatality dominates. War works its poisonous spell on the white Zambesian population, and even before it is clear which side of the conflict Britain will be on, either Germany's or Russia's, and, therefore, even before it is clear what the boys will be fighting about, the young men yearn to escape their dull wives, and the women want to be comforted in the love of their husbands who are supposed to say to them that they do not want to go.

> Martha crept closer to Douglas and demanded the assurance that he did not really want to leave her; just as Stella and Alice were doing in their bedrooms. Douglas, manfully clasping Martha to him, murmured reassurances and looked over her head at the glitter of the wheel. He had not known how intolerably boring and empty his life was until there was a chance of escaping from it; and the more fiercely he determined not to be left out of things, the more tightly he held Martha and consoled her. He was holding a warm, confiding bundle of female flesh, he wished only to love her and be proud of her--for, above all, his pride was fed by her anxious demands for his love; but it was all no use. For, just as he was playing a role which was surely inconsistent with what he thought--the young hero off to the wars for adventure--so she began to speak in the ancient female voice which he found utterly irritating. After a long silence, during which he hoped she might have gone to sleep so that he might dream of adventure without guilt, a small, obstinate, ugly voice remarked that there would be wars so long as men were such babies.[1]

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[1] II, 328.

Martha and Douglas are now thoroughly caught up in that dangerous collective mythology of the glamour of war. Douglas wants to play the young hero and Martha is forced into an ancient female role--at least as old as Andromache's--of dependence and resistance to war. This resistance is about as effective as an alcoholic wife's resistance to her husband's drinking; in reality such resistance fosters the very evils that one is supposed to be fighting. Martha gives in to the collective feelings of blood thirst. "As for that other, deeper, knowledge, the pulse that really moved her, gained from her almost religious feeling for literature, a knowledge that amounted to a vision of mankind as nobility bound and betrayed --this was vanishing entirely beneath the pressure of enjoyable cynicism which was being fed by everything around her, and particularly by her own behavior."[1] The price of acting one way while feeling another is dear: alienation from the best part of ourselves.

Meanwhile, people are suspecting Martha is pregnant, and Mrs. Talbot invites her over for a "proper talk." Martha, feeling more and more cynical--that is, caught up with Mr. Maynard's idea that things can not change--hears Mrs. Talbot tell about her first lover, killed in World War I, and decides that Mrs. Talbot's daughter Elaine must have the same

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[1]II, 329.

experience in World War II, which she does. Mrs. Talbot suggests Martha is pregnant; Martha, resentful, goes off to see Dr. Stern who proclaims she is not. However, after she leaves the office, Dr. Stern, that honorable man, remarks that "it is just as well for the medical profession that laymen had such touching faith in them."[1]

In section four Martha goes back to Dr. Stern who pronounces her four months pregnant, a little too far gone even to consider abortion. Martha is willing to consider it, however (something Dr. Stern apparently tried to avoid), until Stella insists that she have one. Martha immediately changes her mind, and the section ends with Douglas bringing home an insurance policy for the coming baby.

Part two is dominated by Martha's late pregnancy and birth. Mrs. Quest acts like a young mother to whom nature is giving another child and wants to be on hand for the birth. Such a possibility drives Martha to sign up for a nursing home she vowed she would never enter.

Now Stella Mathews, Alice Burrell, and Martha are all pregnant, and while their husbands hang around the Sports Club and practice drilling, for war has been declared, the wives sit at home--uncomfortable, irritated at their husbands, and caught up in the process of biological change and growth. One night,

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[1]II, 331, 341.

when "the boys," Willie and Douglas, call to ask if they can stay later than usual, Alice and Martha get in the car and drive toward the nursing home. It is raining and no one is around. To relieve their frustrations and their awkward bodies, the two women park the car, take off their clothes, and jump into a pothole by the side of the road, where the red muddy waters, the falling rain, a frog guarding his spawn and a green snake give Martha a tremendous sense of relief. The scene is reminiscent of D. H. Lawrence[1] and contrasts ironically to the tension and complications of bourgeois pregnancy with its rules, regulations, and mixed feelings. (The epilogue of part two comes from a handbook on birth: "You must remember that having a baby is a perfectly natural process.")[2] In section three of part two Martha has her baby in a run-by-the-clock nursing home, where during her labor pains, the single nurses are incapable of easing Martha's pain or making the delivery "natural." Only the native scrub woman helps by whispering to Martha, "Let the baby come, let the baby come," like a soothing chant that teaches Martha to move with the pain--and let the baby come. Unlike Natasha, both Martha and

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[1]Paul Schlueter, "A Study of the Major Novels of Doris Lessing" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Illinois University, 1968), pp. 120-122. Dr. Schlueter compares this scene to a swimming experience shared by Ursula and Gudrun in Women in Love.

[2]II, 368.

Alice experience conflicting feelings over birth and a post-natal depression. Douglas, to celebrate the birth of his daughter Caroline, goes on the town and "gives it a bang."[1]

Finally, in section four, Douglas, along with Willie Burrell, Mathew Anderson, and Binkie Maynard, goes off to war, or at least a training station up North.

Part two, then, investigates Martha's pregnancy and birth. They are characterized by conflicting emotions, nothing like the naturalness that the native women who are expected to give birth yearly feel. The bourgeois society with women who no longer see childbirth as their only function react in highly complicated ways to this supposedly natural phenomenon. The relief that Martha and Alice feel in their almost mystical fertility rite is the only contrast to this artificial environment for bearing children. On the collective side, we watch Martha and Douglas react to the war and realize, as Martha does, that men's desire for war is a childish attempt to escape their dull and routine lives, and that devotion to country--not any genuine concern for mankind--is reduced to a false, romantic, and sentimental view of war, echoing with a fatal repetitiousness, the attitudes of their parents toward World War I. "He who forgets the past is condemned to relive it," says Santayana and such an attitude dominates the personal and

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[1]II, 406, 408.

collective life of the Knowells. Douglas is as foolishly exuberant for war as Martha's father was, and Martha is as unanxious for her baby as her mother was.

The epigraph to part three appears to be ironic. It is Turgenev's remark, "When a person dies for his country, then you can say he loves it."[1] Although love of country may have inspired the revolutionaries Turgenev wrote about in On the Eve, or the men who fought in World War I, the allied soldiers of World War II seemed far more cynical. Further, Martha, sensing the role playing involved in going off to war, remarks, "It's easy enough to let yourself be killed."[2]

Section one examines responses to the war. Martha dates a British officer stationed in Zambesia for flight training. He gets drunk and confesses to Martha his fear of dying. When he is sober again, however, he only offers her small change of conversation and nothing more. His sentimentality and mawkishness keep him from real communication. The cynical Mr. Maynard appears again (perhaps to balance the sentimentality of the British officer) and takes Martha to a Current Events Discussion Club. Mr. Maynard's attitude at the meeting prompts Martha's devastating analysis, "You don't really care about anything."[3] His response is to make a play for her.

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[1] II, 423.

[2] II, 433.

[3] II, 448.

Two responses to war are presented here. The fighters respond with sentimentality and, in Tolstoy's terms, are freed of any sense of moral responsibility.[1] The nonfighters are cynical and not unwilling to shed others' blood.

In section two Martha supposedly breaks out of the monster of repetition by breaking her attitude toward Caroline's feeding. Normally Caroline senses Martha's strain and refuses to eat. Now Martha leaves the room and Caroline eats unhindered. Martha comments, "There must be something wrong when you have to learn not to care." Here is a clear example of the individual life balancing the collective life. The only way out of the monster of repetition is not caring, an indifference that will not lead to amelioration of either the personal or the collective side of life. About herself, Martha, who is chafing under the responsibility of caring for Caroline twenty-four hours a day and suffering from blasted dreams, muses that there must be a "woman who combined a warm accepting femininity and motherhood with being what Martha described vaguely but to her own satisfaction as a 'person.'"[2] Her growing dissatisfaction with her life prepares the reader for the breakup of the marriage in part four.

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[1]Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace, trans. by Louise and Aylmer Maude (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 1334.

[2]II, 466.

In section three the narrator leaves Martha Quest Knowell and goes up North to pick up Douglas and Perry who are being sent home because of their ulcers. Perry causes a scene with the native orderly so the doctor gives him a shot to knock him out but "could not understand these colonials, so tough, masculine, violent--and then the sudden collapse into self-pity. It seemed a well of self-pity lay in all of them, ready to overflow at any moment." The doctor, however, thinks that Douglas will be better because he looks so cheerful, but after the doctor dismisses him from service, "Douglas's mouth was bitter. 'No one examined me, I was just pushed off.' Suddenly the lips quivered. He turned away blinking. God help us! thought the doctor, astounded--here it is again."[1]

This section is the first time that the narration leaves Martha Quest but it explicates again the emotional life underlying Zambesia. The men in this colony are at base weak, boyish, sentimental, and self-pitying. They are far from transcending the life of the office boys; in fact, this impersonal group life is the only kind of human contact they can handle. And the collective trauma of war feeds on private emotion of sentimentality. Apparently, this section also prepares us for the coming conflict between Douglas and Martha.

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[1]II, 480, 480.

In section four Douglas comes home. The homecoming is awkward and unpleasant because Douglas, who went to the office first (the place where his real interest lies), did not warn Martha of his return. When he arrives, William, an air force member of the left, is visiting with Martha. In spite of the Knowells' mutual discomfort, both try to be pleasant, and the section ends with Douglas taking out a loan to buy the dream of dreams: a house.

Carl Jung's remark on husbands, that "he must be a dubious hero, a man with possibilities," is used as an epigraphical indictment of the illusion that must accompany bourgeois marriage, and it is in this last part of A Proper Marriage (proper in Jung's sense) that all illusions go and the center falls out.

Section one opens with Martha as mistress of a house and four servants, wife, mother, and daughter to parents now living only a few blocks away. She and her new friends, who come with the house, live a life "in which there could never be a moment's insecurity. 'Security' was the golden word written over their doorways, security was so deeply part of them that it was never questioned or discussed; the great climax of their lives would come at fifty or fifty-five, when their houses, gardens and furniture would be their own, and the pensions and policies bore fruit."[1]

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[1]II, 511.

Martha, with the echo of that destructive repetitiousness, has now "been sucked into the pattern"; and the decision she is faced with is whether she will have another child, for if she does "she would be committed to staying here; she would live in the pattern till she died. Yet that other Martha who stood idly by all this while waiting to be used, never believed for one moment that she would stay; it was inconceiveable."[1]

But pressure builds up for her having a baby. Her own "driving egotism of maternity" wants a baby; Douglas jokes that he will hide the contraceptives; her new circle of friends are all adding to their families; and, finally, Mrs. Quest coyly confesses she has given up sugar in hopes that Martha will get pregnant. Only Mr. Quest understands the nature of Martha's dilemma and urges her to think it over carefully. He also blurts out, "He's--for Lord's sake, why couldn't you pick a man who is a man?"[2]

At Mrs. Quest's and Douglas's urging, Martha visits Dr. Stern who uses his "all women feel this way" technique. He says, "When I come to think of it, there isn't one of my women patients who doesn't come in to me a couple of years after her marriage, wishing she was out of it all. It's not not much of a compliment to us men, I expect, but there it is, that's life." Dr. Stern, that "archpriest," becomes a

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[1]III, 511.

[2]II, 528.

societal representative who tries to keep middle-class women in the prison of meaninglessness that middle-class life creates for them. Although young mothers holding babies are represented everywhere, "what one did not see, what everyone conspired to prevent one seeing, was the middle-aged woman who had done nothing but produce two or three commonplace and tedious citizens in a world that was already too full of them."[1]

But Martha can not quite face leaving Douglas either, for she can only picture herself as Ibsen's Nora getting a meaningless typing job and falling in love with a junior executive, "and the whole thing will begin all over again."[2]

On her way home from Dr. Stern's, Martha runs into William who tells her that there's been a shift in the political situation. That night Douglas says he is going away for a few weeks; Martha reads the papers and discovers the Russians have been turned into heroes for their defense of Stalingrad. Enthusiastic, Martha calls Jasmine, ready to make a political commitment.

It section two Martha goes to a Help for Our Allies meeting and brings home piles of Communist literature which she stays up all night reading. When she finished:

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[1]II, 532-533, 534. [2]II, 534.

> The emotion that gripped her was mostly rage: she was twenty-two; she had been born during that revolution, which, to say the least, had been important in the world's development, and yet this was the first time she had been told anything about it. Her rage was even greater because she had been such a willing accomplice in this process of not thinking. For there had been plenty of moments when she might have fitted a few facts together to make a truth. She had not. Her upbringing, her education, her associates, the newspapers, had all conspired to bring her to the age of twenty-two, an adult, that is, without feeling more about what was going on in the socialist sixth of the world--which happened to be the title of one of the books--than a profound reluctance to think about it at all.
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> . . . . . .
>
> What, then was the cynicism that certainly afflicted all the people around her who thought at all? It no longer seemed even mildly attractive. With one sudden movement of her whole being she discarded it, and committed herself to the other. It was as if her eyes had been opened and her ears made to hear; it was like a rebirth. For the first time in her life she had been offered an ideal to live for.[1]

This long quotation is very important because it ties together some of the underlying ideas of A Proper Marriage. First, the passage focuses on what Martha has been avoiding facing about her life: the futility of its bourgeois underpinnings. Second, she sees the cynicism within a perspective that claims such an attitude is not necessary. Third, there is a coming together of truths rather than their usual compartmentalization--a necessary step in the process of becoming oneself. Finally, she is offered something to live for. She can now picture a clear alternative to her married life with

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[1] II, 546.

Douglas, whereas before her reading, no such option was open.

Meetings now appear to be "adventurous gatherings," and Jasmine Cohen is "so efficient, so self-effacing, devoted." Not being satisfied just to join the Help for Our Allies Committee, Martha tells William she wants to be a Communist. The problem is that there is, at present, no group, but Anton Hesse and Andrew McGraw, both Communists, meet and decide that if a cell is formed, even though Zambesia is not ready for such action, it will be their duty to work with the new group.

In section three Douglas who is away on business writes hysterical letters to Martha based on information he has been receiving from Mrs. Talbot. When he arrives, pouting and angry, Martha proposes a compromise: she will join the Communist Party and have an affair with William, but remain married to Douglas. The only way Douglas can respond to this outrageous proposal is to stagger and cry, "Matty! we're all right, aren't we? We're all right?" Then, "he fell back from her, and this time he was grinding his teeth and glaring." Martha later confesses to Jasmine that she does not know what Douglas is so angry about and Jasmine, following Engels, replies, "His property instinct is outraged."[1]

Martha goes to a meeting that night where the characters who will play an important part in the next novel are assembled.

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[1]II, 564, 564, 567.

Jackie Bolton, member of the air force and firebrand leader, urges the formation of a Communist Party. Despite the more mature reasoning against such a move, his motion carries because of his articulate idealism. Martha returns home to an ugly scene with Douglas who accuses her all night of having affairs with many different men. Martha confesses just so she can get some sleep. The unspoken irony is that Douglas himself had an affair up North, while Martha, although she wants to have an affair with William, has not.

When section four opens, Martha has a chat with Mrs. Talbot at Douglas's urging. The fact that Martha tells Mrs. Talbot she hates Douglas, that she is leaving him, that she has been bored with her life, and that they do not get along sexually does not dissuade Mrs. Talbot from urging her to stay with Douglas having affairs on the side, if she wants to. What value she would see in having the marriage stay together (Caroline's welfare is never an issue) becomes clear when Mrs. Talbot mentions that William "hasn't any money." As the days drag on, Martha senses that if she does not keep to a feeling of "obstinate pride," she will slip into a feeling of "satisfied self-pity"[1] that will keep her married to Douglas.

But the days go by and Martha seems incapable of making any move.

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[1]II, 583, 584.

> She made one discovery. It was this. That her feeling that she was being moved along a process which had its own laws was justified. When a woman left a husband, or threatened to leave him--that is, a woman of her type, who insisted on her rights to behave as a man would--then the husband went through certain actions like an automaton, beginning with confiscating the contraceptives, threatening to make her forceably pregnant, accusing her of multifarious infidelities, and ending in self-abasing weeping appeals that she should change her mind and stay. The thought that Douglas might weep and appeal horrified Martha. She felt she could not withstand it. But even more frightening, because it was so humiliating, was the idea that what she did and what Douglas did was inevitable, they were involved in a pattern of behavior which they could not alter.[1]

The pattern finally works itself out when Douglas takes his gun and threatens to shoot Caroline, Martha, and himself. Although he does not, Mrs. Knowell, who is visiting during the crisis comforts her baby Doug, "It's all right, dear. She couldn't leave you--could you Matty?"[2] But Martha will not give in to that self-pity. Douglas puts the gun away but comes after Martha to beat her up; she runs out of the house to her mother's who tells her to go home with Douglas. Martha leaves Douglas the next morning to Mr. Maynard's remark that with the French Revolution for a father and the Russian Revolution for a mother, there is no need for a family.

The thematic implications of Martha's and Douglas's last days together have an interesting sidelight. At one point during the harrassment, Martha wonders, "What did the state of self-displaying hysteria Douglas was in have in common

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[1] II, 595.

[2] II, 594.

with the shrill, maudlin self-pity of a leader in the Zambesia News when it was complaining that the outside world did not understand the sacrifices the white population made in developing the blacks? For there was a connection, she felt. Not in her own experience, nor in any book, had she found the state Douglas was now in. Yet precisely that same note was struck in every issue of the local newspapers--goodness betrayed, self-righteousness on exhibition, heartless enemies discovered everywhere."[1]

Douglas's patriarchal sense of being threatened and the white colonialists' feeling of being misunderstood have their roots in the same soil: the attitude of one power group toward another. Although the book was not written before A Proper Marriage, Kate Millett in Sexual Politics points out that to women are ascribed all the characteristics any superior group projects unto an inferior group, and that politically and socially women are given the unequal treatment that categorizes them as inferior. The tone of the racist and the patriarchist is the same: a feeling of being wronged because privilege is being threatened.

Mrs. Lessing herself in an interview with Florence Howe sees the relationship between racism and sexism like this: "The relationship between the sexes everywhere, not just in

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[1]II, 594.

Western society, is so much of a melting pot. It is like the color bar--all kinds of emotions that don't belong get sucked in. You know, I am convinced that all sorts of emotions that have nothing to do with color get associated around the color bar. Similarly with men and women. Any sort of loaded point sucks in anger or fear."[1] And, in another interview with Roy Newquist, Mrs. Lessing states: "All of these violent hostilities [she is talking about communism and capitalism here] are unreal. They've got very little to do with human beings."[2]

We can see, then, how A Proper Marriage furthers the thematic intention of Children of Violence. The patterns that Martha and Douglas get swept up in--the violence of the war, Douglas's threatened sexist response to Martha's behaving as a man would, and the communal unreality of the color bar--are patterns that people in "thinghood" (to borrow a phrase from Anthony Burgess), rather than personhood, are exposed to. Martha has now escaped from the pattern of submission to the office boys of capitalism but falls unknowingly into the pattern of submission to the social bureaucrats.

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[1]Florence Howe, "A Talk with Doris Lessing," The Nation (March 6, 1967), p. 10.

[2]Counterpoint, ed. by Roy Newquist (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1964), p. 422.

A Ripple from the Storm

In A Ripple from the Storm the reader sees how Martha lives with her new family--the French and Russian Revolutions. Since Martha has left Douglas, Caroline, and her bourgeois life behind, there is a feeling that she has escaped "the monster of repetition." Just as her move from veld to city, from the single Sports Club life to marriage with Douglas, all appeared to be liberations, so this incarnation as a dedicated Communist appears to be a liberation. What now enters the series to replace the sense of repetition that accompanies bourgeois life is a sense of the future: when Communism comes, when Zambesia is socialist. The dream of the glorious future is what gives Martha the sense that there is a possibility of breaking out of patterns of repetition.

Louis Aragon's epigraph, introducing part one, summarizes Martha's Communist state of mind. Aragon perceives that to the uninitiated, the exultation that accompanies belief in an absolute (in this case, Martha's Communism) appears to manifest itself as a passion for unhappiness. The frenzy of Martha's new life precludes a "personal" one.

Section one opens with a meeting of the Help for Our Allies group. The same qualities that make Jackie such a good group leader are also the qualities that are disastrous for the group. Jackie alienates important people but does not

care because they violate the purity of his dream. After the meeting, Jackie tells the group that he and William are to be posted. Martha goes home to find Douglas waiting for her to ask if she would contest a desertion divorce by cross-claiming adultery naming Elaine Talbot as correspondent. Of course, Martha will not. When he leaves, Martha is left open "to a feeling of deep, impersonal pain that seemed to be lying in wait for her moments of weakness like an enemy whose name she did not know, but whose shape and attributes she was learning because of its shadow, deepening steadily outside the bright shell she lived within."[1] The pain that Martha is fighting with the bustle of her activism is precisely what she must face in order to become herself, but it will be a long time before she realizes this.

After Jackie and William get posted, a new era begins for the group. In section two Anton Hesse takes over as chairman of the group and his personality will dominate the group's action or more precisely inaction. At the first meeting after Jackie leaves, Anton gives a speech: "A Communist must consider himself a dead man on leave. . . . A Communist knows that in himself he is nothing, but in so far as he represents the suppressed working people he is everything." Later on he recites the prayer-like words of Lenin's that all the members

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[1]III, 35.

have learned by heart: "Man's dearest possession is life; and since it is given to him to live but once, he must so live as to feel no torturing regrets for years without purpose; so live as not to be seared with the shame of a cowardly and trivial past; so live that, dying, he can say: All my life and all my strength was given to the finest cause in the world—the liberation of mankind."[1]

The two selections offer ways out of the problem of dealing with the past. The first, to see oneself as a "dead man on leave," is to assume a resurrectional stance toward existence and to be ready to die "again" for the cause. Another way out, much like the first, is to avoid a "cowardly and trivial past" by informing one's life with purpose. The purifying intention of working for the liberation of mankind will eliminate personal guilt and the fruitlessness of the collective and personal past. Purposefulness, then, becomes the key for dealing with the past. The individual's stance in relation to the collective is to ignore the past and with it one's individuality.

A few days later (in section three) Martha runs into Mr. Maynard, whom she regarded "like a specimen of horror from a dead epoch; she was positively pale with disgust." She is shocked that Mr. Maynard would stoop to be Mrs. Talbot's

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[1] III, 47, 47.

messenger boy and inquire if she is going to contest Douglas's divorce proceedings. (Mr. Maynard admits that he and Mrs. Talbot have been having an affair for years.) Martha explains that she will not, that Douglas is simply telling Mrs. Talbot this to evoke sympathy. Then Mr. Maynard asks Martha if she will ask Maisie, a friend of Martha's from the office, not to marry his son Binkie. Again, Martha is shocked and disgusted that he would interfere with the lives of other people in such a high-handed manner. Martha leaves in disgust and goes to have dinner with Anton Hesse with whom her personal problem of being unable to find new members for the group turns into an "item on the agenda."[1] The thematic equation of communist and capitalist submission is made in the structure. Mr. Maynard feels justified in handling his son's life like a piece of business, and Anton regards personal matters with the coldness given to a group meeting. The emotional basis of the two submissions may vary slightly, but, in essence, they are linked together.

At the meeting, Martha, oblivious to her new subjugation, hears the words she needs and wants to hear. Anton talks about "'the bourgeois illusion of eternity, the illusion that the present system of government is permanent . . .' and the terrible fear that haunted her [Martha], the nightmare of

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[1]III, 57, 58.

recurring and fated evil was pushed by the words into a place where it was no longer dangerous."[1] The new individual relationship Martha has to the collective is the consciousness of purpose which, in itself, is supposed to bring wholeness and fruition. The totem of words and beliefs now stands as a new mystic weapon with which to fight off the past.

Section four is constructed to show the personal underpinnings of the collective dream. Martha, selling Watchdog newspapers in the Coloured Quarters, is confronted by some actual problems of the people living there. One woman's son is dying, but he refuses to go into the hospital; another person will have his furniture taken away if he does not raise two pounds by six o'clock. Later that day, Martha has a talk with Tommy, a young working class member of the group brought in by the De Preez couple. Tommy is too young to be deceitful, so his honest comments, while merely tolerated by the group, are really the most genuine remarks about the failure of Communism that the reader confronts in the novel. For example, Tommy confesses to racist tendencies and liking Natasha in War and Peace; then he blurts out, "I don't think people brought up here, white people, can ever be good communists." Martha says they have to try. Later Tommy makes another objection about a Russian newspaper calling the German's "scum": "I mean they are human beings."[2]

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[1] III, 64.

[2] III, 84, 84.

This labeling of people goes on on the local level also; Boris Kreuger is designated a Trotskyite because he did not join the group. Solly Cohen, who shows up at an exhibition on Russia with a cardboard sign covered with the names of hundreds of Russian officers purged by Stalin, is dismissed as "being corrupted by capitalist propaganda."[1]

Then, at the group meeting Martha and the others who spent their time on personal problems in the Coloured Quarter are castigated by Anton for wasting their time because the Coloured are such a small minority in Zambesia. Marie du Preez says to Anton after a long argument about the situation, "I've told you I can't argue with you intellectually. But I feel you are wrong."[2]

It becomes quite clear in the last section of part one what the nature of the personal life is to be in relation to the collective. A superimposed doctrine, argued intelligently by Anton, is to be accepted, and one's genuine difficulties like Tommy's are to be ignored; truth, like Solly's about Stalinism, is propaganda; thought is a weapon to repress feeling; and, finally, the group is supposed to analyze the local situation within a theoretical framework and ignore possibilities for real functioning. Just as one's own life is seen as a dead man on leave dedicated to serving the ideal, the collective

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[1] III, 83.

[2] III, 91.

life is seen, not as it actually is, but as it is dissected. Consequently, the Communists are enclosing themselves in their dry little meetings, touching neither the reality of their own private feelings nor the reality of the national situation. Dominated by a belief in the future, the Communists are cut off from the present and society around them. Like emigrees in a strange land, they will turn in on themselves and squabble continuously.

The epigraph of part two, from A. A. Zhdanov, predicts the infighting to come: "Lenin, as we know, did not spare his opponents."[1]

Before the group fighting is discussed, Martha gets sick.

The past and the future overtake Martha in her dreams as section one opens with her lying feverishly in bed dreaming of the past and the future, but unable to connect them. She dreams of "that Country," which is "pale misted, flat; gulls cried like children around violet-coloured shores. She stood on coloured chalky rocks with a bitter sea washing around her feet and the smell of salt was in her nostrils."[2] She thinks this country as England (which it is not. It is the island Martha escapes to after the poisonous gasses inundate England.), but she wonders how she can feel herself to be an exile from a

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[1] III, 94.

[2] III, 95.

country where she has never traveled. She is, in reality, feeling herself to be an exile from herself, a state she will grow into at some future date.

Then she dreams of the past. Taking place in a deserted mine near the Quest veld, the dreams portray a petrified saurian with "a scaly ancient eye, filmed over with mine dust, a sorrowful eye"[1] trapped in a pit, unable to get out. Martha realizes this beast is alive and thinks:

> It's alive after so many centuries. And it will take centuries more to die. Perhaps I can dig it out?
>
> But it seemed quite right that the vast half-fossilized extinct creature should be there, alive still in the massive weight of the earth. . . .
>
> She woke, all her limbs irritated by fever. Now she was awake the dream seemed frightening, but because of its distance from the cold salt-sprayed shores of "that country.". . . For the cold salt-sprayed shores and the deep sullen pit seemed to have nothing in common, not to be connected, and their lack of connection was a danger.[2]

It will not be until The Four-Gated City that Martha "digs out the past," the only way to deal with it. Until then, she can make no connection between the past and the future, either her own or the collective past. She is, until this connection is made and she becomes what she is capable of being, condemned to live through pattern after pattern in what seems to be a fated and evil way. The danger of not connecting past and future, of compartmentalizing ourselves, of not becoming what we are capable of being, is terrifying indeed,

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[1] III, 96.

[2] III, 96.

and it includes the possibility of blowing ourselves up on the collective level.

Martha's sickness proves to be serious and Anton Hesse nurses her through. When Martha recovers "it was now accepted that Martha and Anton were a couple."[1]

In section two the scene shifts to the Maynards who have just discovered that Maisie is pregnant by their son Binkie. Mr. Maynard goes to visit Maisie, and falsely assuming that she is trying to blackmail him, Mr. Maynard earns Maisie's hatred. Annoyed with the world, Mr. Maynard goes off to court and gives unusually stiff penalties to black and white alike. Also, he questions Elias Phiri, a spy on the group, and insists that he find out more about their activities. Mr. Maynard's personal distrust of Maisie and his manipulative interference in the lives of others, both on the individual level, parallel perfectly the collective rule of white colonialism in Zambesia. Like Lenin, Mr. Maynard does not spare his opponents either.

That night, in section three, Martha meets Anton for the first time since she has been well and notices there is a distinct change in his behavior toward her, an "awkward gallantry"[2] and a possessiveness much unlike the simple kindness he showed when she was sick.

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[1] III, 110. [2] III, 121.

> She thought: I've become something else for him, and it made her uncomfortable and resentful. Again she felt caged and hemmed in: there was a new possessiveness in him, something caged and cold.
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> I'm caught for life, she thought; but the words 'for life' released her from anxiety. They all of them saw the future as something short and violent. Somewhere just before them was a dark gulf or chasm, into which they must all disappear. "A Communist is a dead man on leave," she thought. "That's what matters, and not how I feel about Anton. And, anyway, if Anton and I are unhappy it will be easy to separate."[1]

The idea of role-playing is mentioned, but now dismissed by Martha because of her sense of futurity. There is a compartmentalization going on about the future also. Her own individual feelings "didn't matter," but the future of the human race will be glorious.

At the meeting, growing resentment against Anton's leadership surfaces. Andrew McGrew co-opts the criticism during the period of group criticism by rattling off in a friendly way complaints the group has against Anton. They are summarized in the word, "bureaucrat." Murdoch, an R.A.F. member, complains the group is a waste of time and proves it by pointing to Anton's indifferent attitude toward Maisie's pregnancy. (Maisie had confided to Martha that she would rather have the baby than an abortion, and Martha told the group.) Then Tommy criticizes Martha for her middle-class manner of saying "things that are serious in an unserious way." For, he continues, middle-class

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[1]III, 121.

people "say something and you have to think, do they mean it or don't they."[1] Anton ironically disposes of the abortion problem by constituting Andrew and Martha as a Sub-Committee to look into it, and the Air Force members of the group leave, with a growing sense of anger.

The inability of Anton to treat personal problems in any kind of genuine way, coupled with his awkwardness in his new relationship with Martha, becomes an analogue for the collective failure of the group, and Martha's saying things in an unserious way indicates her inability to face up to the reality of the situation or of herself.

Like Lenin and Mr. Maynard, the group members do not spare their opponents, but the opponents and antagonisms now exist within the group.

Section four, like section three, part three in A Proper Marriage when the narrator follows Douglas on his way home from the army, leaves Martha, and the narration follows Jimmy Jones, one of the air force members of the group who is antagonistic to Anton, back to the Air Force base. One by one his air force buddies leave him until he is alone and most romantically decides to visit in the middle of the night and against all colony rules, his dear friend and comrade, Elias

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[1]III, 132, 132.

phiri, Mr. Maynard's plant. When he gets to the Location, he falls on the fence: "Fences, fences everywhere you look, concentration camps everywhere and fences. He thought of the concentration camps in Europe and without any feeling of being alien. He felt identified with them, and with the people sleeping all around him in their little boxes and shacks."[1] But Jimmy, as a representative of the group, assumes that the comradeship of the Communist Party is enough to make the fences, the divisions between people, vanish like the influence of the past. In a sick state of mind, he merely acts out what the group seems to be thinking and dreaming. Naturally, he is horribly disillusioned at his reception in the Location. When he finally gets to Elias Phiri's, the terrified black man runs immediately to tell Judge Maynard. Jimmy's trip to the Location, seen as a psychic acting out of the dream of brotherhood, indicates that one can not treat opposition by pretending it does not exist.

The epigraph to part three relates directly to Martha's involvement with Anton: "My friendship for him began by my being struck by the stand he took on certain political questions."[2]

Section one begins with Martha and Anton moving closer together; they begin their affair. Anton invites her to the movies first, and Martha thinks "he can't be doing anything so

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[1] III, 150.

[2] III, 161.

vulgar as to take me to the pictures in order to set the mood for going to bed." But he certainly is, and the sex that follows is "short and violent."[1]

The atmosphere of the group prepares Martha to get closer to Anton also, for, in a spirit of love and comradeship, Andrew has married Maisie so that the baby will have a name and a father. In rejoicing over their marriage, a new member of the group from Greece, Athen, summarizes the feelings of the group:

> "Comrades, we live in a terrible and ugly time, we live when capitalism is a beast who murders us, starves us, keeps from us the joy of life. As Communists we must try to live as if the ugliness was already dead. We must try and live like socialists who care for each other and for people, even while we are hurt all the time by capitalism which is cruel. And so I am happy to hear about these two comrades. That shows we in this room are real Communists. I am proud and happy to be with you in this room."[2]

Athen is one member of the group who remains true to the goodness and compassion that are principles on which Communism is formed, and he does not forget these principles, the way dry and impersonal Anton does. Now, the McGrew marriage becomes symbolic of the group dream of joy in life through personal happiness in marriage. Maisie, however, has a slight premonition that being married to Andrew, while carrying Binkie's child, will be difficult. The past keeps refusing to die, both on the personal and the collective level.

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[1]III, 165.

[2]III, 169.

Section two opens with the meeting of the Labour Party executive branch to which six Communists are invited to represent branches too far away to send representatives. Mrs. Van der Bylt is the woman who invited them because, as it becomes clear in the course of the meeting, she wants their six votes to confirm that Africans will be taken into the Labour Party, even though they can not vote. The motion passes and it is to be decided at a future meeting whether the Africans will meet separately, or with the regularly constituted white groups. Martha leaves the meeting and heads for Maisie and Andrew's apartment where warmth and love exude. Again, however, it is Tommy who makes the predictive remark: "All the same--it's not Andrew's kid at all." Athen replies: "Andrew is a good man. He is a good comrade. Yes, there are very good people in the world in spite of everything."[1] The question is whether this good man will be able to continue to live in these circumstances and whether the political manoeuvering of Mrs. Van will work.

Martha rushes off to meet Anton who tells her he has been visited by a C.I.D. man who told him that having an affair with a British woman was irregular conduct for an enemy alien. Consequently, Anton and Martha will have to get married or break up, and if they break up, Anton might be interned

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[1]III, 181, 181.

because of his Communist activities. Martha, recalling that Andrew married Maisie to help her out, decides to marry Anton with that same spirit. Here is a clear instance detailing a Communist's submission to the collective. Personal feelings are to be put aside for the sake of the group. One is reminded of Rubashov in Koestler's Darkness at Noon for a terrifying example of a man whose individual conscience is given over to the collective.

In section three, Martha marries. Immediately after the ceremony (before Judge Maynard again), she is delighted to go to a meeting on the Location with Mrs. Van, just to escape giving to the marriage any dignity or respect. Again, the presumption is that personal feelings can be escaped through dedication.

Section four follows Mrs. Van home, where her husband is waiting for some attention. Mrs. Van's life and marriage are very carefully discussed in this section. Mrs. Van has had "two great illuminations" in her life; both ban emotion and opt for reason, one in her relationship with the collective, the other in her personal life. The first came to her as a young girl visiting Europe and picking up currents of socialist and pacifist thought. She decided, however, that she did not know enough to "participate emotionally" in these events, but she would spend the rest of her life reading and learning. The

second illumination came one night after she was married and realized that she was superior to her husband, who would never share her thirst for learning. She was lying in bed reading Ingersoll; her husband, who had started to make love to her, saw the book and said, "I see you have better company than me, my dear. Sleep well."[1] From that moment on, Mrs. Van put herself beyond being hurt by her husband; he became her first child and she went on to have seven more. She continued to do her reading at night and became a political figure in her own right, but she always catered to her husband's wishes.

Now, Martha's marriage stirs up memories of that night:

> Now, after all those years, Mrs. Van remembered the image that had filled the girl's mind through those long hours while she lay awake by a man who also lay awake, waiting for her to turn to him. The image was of something deep, soft, dark and vulnerable, and of a very sharp sword stabbing into it, again and again. She had not moved, had not let her arm relax into contact with her husband's, and so the sword had not stabbed her, never again, the soft dark painful place which she felt to be somewhere under her heart had remained untouched. She had remained herself.[2]

When Martha has her affair with Thomas Stern, she seems to expose herself to the painful stabbings and, rather than remaining herself, is able to expand her personality and get outside her own mind. Mrs. Van, however, compartmentalizes her life by avoiding her own emotions.

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[1] III, 201, 204.

[2] III, pp. 214-215.

Mrs. Van goes to Martha's that night bringing roses, hoping to celebrate a marriage that will be happier than her own, but something in Martha's attitude tells her that this marriage will not be happy. The party is interrupted by the arrival of the newspapers with the headlines: "Agitators Inciting Africans to Revolt." This bad publicity of the afternoon's meeting on the Location ruins the Labour Party.

All of part four deals with breakup: of Maisie's and Andrew's marriage, of Martha's and Anton's marriage, of the Labour Party, of the Communist Party. The epigraph, from Marx, "The origin of states gets lost in a myth in which one may believe, but may not discuss,"[1] indicates the nature of the difficulties--unanswerable questions surface.

Section one handles the breakup of Maisie and Andrew. Mrs. Maynard arrives at Maisie's one day to announce that Binkie is coming home on compassionate leave and will see her the following day. Binkie's arrival makes Andrew see Maisie's swollen body as repulsive. "He had lived with the growth and the change of her body, hardly noticing it, burying his face at night thankfully in her warm full shoulders, greeting the child under her flesh with her hands, never thinking that it was not his own. Now, because Binkie was coming, he kept thinking: This is not my child, and her pregnancy was strange and

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[1] III, 161.

distasteful."[1] And his feelings make it impossible for him to want her. However, Andrew pleads with Maisie not to quarrel. Maisie replies: "Quarrel? This isn't a quarrel. You don't love me anymore."[2] Directly upstairs Martha and Anton are having their troubles, too, which finally surface when Martha makes a light joke about "Uncle Joe" Stalin. Anton refuses to talk to her, until, it is implied, she "apologizes." What is similar in all three marriages--Mrs. Van's, Maisie's, and Martha's--is that at some point in the relationship one of the partners, because of what he is or feels, so deeply offends the other that repairing the relationship is impossible. Mrs. Van, however, remains committed to her marriage in spite of an ireconcilable break between her and her husband; Maisie and Andrew separate; Martha patches things up with Anton, but leaves him eventually. None of these problems, like the origin of a state, can be talked out or discussed away because the integrity of the person is involved. It is the system of marriage itself, either bourgeois or communist, that fosters relationships that, finally, are based on these emotional dishonesties, and the collective life, it is presumed, will suffer until one's personal life can be lived with integrity.

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[1] III, 230. [2] III,

This insight into the individual side of life applies also at this point in the novel to the collective level. Mrs. Van and the other progressive Labourites are fighting for a separate branch in the Labour Party; Tommy had pointed out that this is not the democratic side of the argument; it would be more democratic to have integrated branches. However, Mrs. Van and the others apparently realize that the whites would never accept integrated meetings, so the best thing to fight for the moment is a separated African branch. It is a compromise measure. Mrs. Van agrees: "Of course it is undemocratic. I'm always surprised how often in this country progressives have to fight on bad moral grounds."[1] She also recalls that white trade unionism kept the blacks out of skilled work for years on the sound moral argument that it is unfair for black workers to be paid less than white workers.

Immediately following this discussion, Mrs. Van talks to Martha about marriage as a question of tolerance and compromise. "Yet there were times when one wondered if one should compromise on a principle."[2] Mrs. Van represents compromise on a political level and her marriage represents compromise on a personal level, and these compromises are costly, politically and personally.

In section two Anton breaks his angry silence with

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[1] III, 237.

[2] III, 238.

Martha to tell her to round up the group for a meeting that evening. After spending the day rounding up the members, Martha and a few others show up for this important meeting which Anton announces he called to propose a series of lectures on the history of the Communist Party. The members of the group can hardly believe this is the reason for calling a meeting at a time when the union members of the group are in danger of losing their union positions because of the meeting on the Location, and everyone else is tired and overworked. Anton's insensitivity to the needs and concerns of the people around him puts the finishing touches of destruction to the Communist Party in Zambesia. Martha, not wanting to be alone with Anton, goes to Maisie's after the meeting to hear that Maisie is now set hard against both men, Binkie and Andrew.

In section three the executive meeting of the Labour Party meets to vote on the African branch. After hours of debate, a tie vote is cast, and it is decided to have a congress to resolve the matter. Then, members of the Party take after Jack Dobie, a member of parliament, for his policies on India, and Jack decides to fight the scurrilous attack that has been launched against him by suing the printer of the pamphlets. The purpose of his action is to publicize his real views on India.

Needless to say, Jack loses his case (in section four);

the Labour Party splits over allowing Africans in, and the Communist Party in Zambesia dwindles to three members. Martha visits Maisie who is having false labor pains, and Maisie discusses the fact that Andrew has left her and Binkie's relationship with her: "They neither of them cared about me, not really. They talked about each other more than me," she says and continues, "What I can't understand, Matty, it's this--suddenly it wasn't me any more that either of them was fond of. But I feel just the same."[1]

Maisie, here, becomes the clue to the understanding of Martha's puzzlement over the split in the Labour Party. Martha muses, "One, it was inevitable that everything should have happened in exactly the way it had happened: no one could have behaved differently. Two, that everything that had happened was unreal, grotesque, and irrelevant."[2]

Martha's comments apply equally as well to the political situation as to Maisie's individual situation. The two men involved with Maisie--one a capitalist representative who is Binkie and the other a socialist representative who is Andrew--become so engrossed with trying to see the other's relation to Maisie that they lose sight of Maisie herself. Maisie remains unchanged. This loss of sight concerning basic issues is precisely what happens in the political arena: the

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[1]III, 266. [2]III, 271.

liberal side of Zambesia, the Labour Party, gets so involved with its own infighting that all major issues are lost sight of.

The reasons why the Communists lose sight of their original goals have been existentially presented in this novel. Anton, dry and impersonal, can feel very little, much less compassion for the masses he is supposed to be liberating. Andrew, who makes a compassionate gesture towards Maisie by marrying her, finds happiness in this compassion but loses it for both of them when he allows his jealous feelings over the fathership of Maisie's baby to enter into the situation. Mrs. Van, the labourite and socialist, who, although not a Communist, is supposed to be dedicated to goodness and compassion, has allowed her personal life to become dry and compartmentalized so she consequently views the political situation only rationally, forgetting about the deep feelings of the opposition which will destroy the party, even if her side technically wins.

Because of each individual's failure to use the effort of imagination necessary to become himself, the Left fails as miserably in ameliorating the political situation as the Right has mercilessly and thoughtlessly created it in the first place. Binkie fathers Maisie's baby, but can not own up to that fathership, Andrew steps into the breach in a gesture of compassion, but, because of futile jealousy and property feelings, fails to make his promise bear fruit. To translate into

political terms: the Left promises to save the situation created by the Right, but through the same faults, becomes incapable of delivering on that promise. No political solution seems possible.

The Leftists, then, in spite of their attempts to break the shackles of the past, through their inability to come to grips with themselves fall into the same bourgeois trap: the monster of repetition. This monster of repetition makes Martha sense that what happened in the political arena is somehow inevitable, and, because attention was diffused from original goals, the events appear as "unreal, grotesque, and irrelevant."

All political action seems to be involved in inevitable, but irrelevant patterns. These are patterns of conduct that seem to have their own intrinsic laws, which, once a person enters into this particular area of conduct, must work themselves through to their particular end. For example, Ella in The Golden Notebook is writing a novel about a man who spends his life preparing to commit suicide, but he does not realize this until the moment he performs the action. Political action is like this kind of pattern. Once a person gets caught up in a particular movement, he must move to its inevitable conclusion.

Coupled with Martha's insight about political action is her personal reflection that she is not a person yet. She thinks, "Why is it I listen for the echoes of other people in

my voice and what I do all the time? The fact is, I'm not a person at all, I'm nothing yet--perhaps I never will be."[1] Martha has lived through another pattern, but she will not give up Communism until the end of Landlocked, the following volume.

Landlocked

While A Ripple from the Storm deals with Communist activities during relatively liberal times, Landlocked investigates its Kafkaesque inaction when the heat is on.[2] Because the war is over and the Soviet Union is no longer an official ally, Zambesian officials react to the new cold war policy by refusing halls for Leftist meetings.

In direct proportion as official political activity diminishes, interest in Martha's personal life increases. The epigraph to section one indicates this shift. Taken from

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[1]III, 270. Father Alfred Augustine Carey, O.F.M., in his unpublished dissertation, "Doris Lessing: The Search for Reality" (University of Wisconsin, 1965), makes the point that in the novels of Doris Lessing (up to and including The Golden Notebook, but not beyond) that the effect of "these experiences on most individuals was to cut them off from reality, Communism no less than colonial society, political involvement no less than social indifference" (p. 148).

[2]Both in her interview with Studs Terkel (May, 1969) and Jonah Raskin, "Doris Lessing at Stony Brook: An Interview," New American Review, Number Eight (New York: New American Library, 1970), Mrs. Lessing expresses concern over the American Left movement and her fear that it is not preparing itself for the time when repression hits.

Idries Shah's The Sufis, the epigraph reads:

> The Mulla walked into a shop one day. The owner came forward to serve him.
> "First things first," said Nasrudin; "did you see me walk into your shop?"
> "Of course."
> "Have you ever seen me before?"
> "Never in my life."
> "Then how do you know it is me?"[1]

The epigraph indicates that the focus of Landlocked will more clearly center around who Martha is, rather than who she appears to be.

Section one opens with Martha being offered an important job in the law firm where she is now working. Mr. Robinson describes her future job in glowing terms, which tempt Martha, who realizes that "if she wasn't careful, she was going to give in." She would be giving in because she knows the job would demand her "heart and soul."[2] The implication seems to be that a career is a tempting way of establishing one's identity, but it falls far short of finding out who one really is.

After work Martha will visit Maisie, Solly and Joss Cohen, run into Athen and Thomas Stern, visit Johnny Lindsay, wind up her evening at her family's house, and come home to Anton, tired and exhausted. This running around expresses in a concrete way all the roles she is temporarily playing, while she still has no idea of who she is.

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[1] IV, 275.

[2] IV, 281, 280.

First, Maisie. Martha muses to herself that she is in a period of "holding herself together," which can only be done by keeping all the parts of her life--the various people in it--separate, but Maisie can see the real Martha under the "false shells."[1] Maisie is now working as a waitress in a bar, living upstairs with her daughter Rita.

What is worrying the two women is the Maynards who keep hounding Maisie about the improper way their grandchild is being raised. Rita, given her dual parentage of both Binkie the Capitalist and Andrew the Communist, becomes some kind of minor analogue for future society, and, in The Four-Gated City Rita, as a young adult, will feel she is coming home to England. That Martha is not able to stand up to Mr. Maynard is representative of her inability to be herself. She still submits to this office boy of capitalism and Martha muses: "Of course, he wants to know whether I can be bullied. And I can be."[2] The last phrase is put in italics, indicating how important to Mrs. Lessing it is that Martha can not face up to Mr. Maynard. Consequently, when the Maynards appear in the final volume, that appearance is not accidental.

Martha leaves Maisie to meet Solly Cohen, who invited her by saying he wanted to talk about an African group that was forming, but he really wanted to make a play for her. Joss

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[1] IV, 286, 286. [2] IV, 294.

joins them and announces he is leaving for up North. Although Martha refuses Solly's flirtation, she thinks: "If she lives, precariously, in a house with half a dozen rooms, each room full of people . . . then what was she waiting for, in waiting for (as she knew she did) a man? Why, someone who would unify her elements, a man would be like a roof, or like a fire burning in the centre of the empty space." Immediately after this musing, Martha runs into Athen in the office where she is getting books to take to sick Johnny Lindsay, an old labor leader and special friend of Mrs. Van, and bewails that her life is "crude and ridiculous,"[1] just before she talks to Thomas Stern. After visiting Johnny Lindsay and her family, Martha goes home, exhausted.

In section two, the young radicals go to the movies where the news flashes a picture of a defeated, hungry German soldier, for the end of the war in Europe is fast approaching. Martha sees this soldier as a "shocked, frightened boy," Anton the German thinks the Germans deserve a "good hiding," and Thomas Stern, just having heard from a friend who was with the troops that liberated Belsen, mutters under his breath, "Bastards, bastards, bastards."[2] The group has coffee together and Thomas rather pointedly tells Martha he will call. Martha regards Joss rather carefully and considers having an affair with

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[1] IV, 320, 304.

[2] IV, 320, 327, 321.

him, but knows he is leaving town. The section ends with Martha thinking that Joss would be "safer"[1] to have an affair with than Thomas Stern, and she wonders what she means by that.

Section three breaks away from following Martha and starts with Mrs. Quest on "Victory morning," the day peace will be celebrated in Zambesia. It is fitting with the theme of the novel that the woman least capable of experiencing peace is the character the narrator follows to discuss this day. The day brings to Mrs. Quest a disturbing dream about her mother, unrealized plans to get her husband to the peace celebration, and, as usual, bickering with Martha. Mrs. Quest comforts herself with a fantasy about Judge Maynard arresting Martha but letting her go, provided Mrs. Quest be her guardian and keep close watch on her. What these fantasies, dreams, and delusions have to do with her life, Mrs. Quest has no idea, for, to her, her thoughts never "counted. In short, Mrs. Quest was like ninety-nine per cent of humanity: if she spent an afternoon jam-making, while her mind was filled with thoughts envious, spiteful, lustful--violent; then she spent the afternoon making jam."[2] Clearly, people for whom thoughts never count and for whom there is no self-awareness can never become themselves, nor can they help the collective life of man struggle toward a meaningful peace, rather than a period

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[1] IV, 332.

[2] IV, 346.

between hostilities, the reality behind what Mrs. Quest desires so much to celebrate.

The combination of her father's illness and her mother's pettiness makes Martha hope that whatever it was that got her parents will not get her. Martha leaves the Quest house and goes to the office where she runs into Thomas, who will help insure that Martha will not turn out like her parents. It is now clear that she and Thomas will have an affair and that it will be a serious one:

> She had understood that to be with Thomas would be more serious than anything yet in her life, yet she did not know how she knew this, and she was not sure it was what she wanted. A few weeks ago she had thought: Thomas, or Joss--a man. Now here was Thomas and he was sucking her in to an intensity of feeling simply by standing there and claiming her.[1]

The reader discovers in section four that the affair has not happened yet because Thomas has been transferred, but he is back in the city for a speech which, although it says things about the Soviet Union that were acceptable during the war, causes resentment and a near riot. In short, public opinion had shifted, or, as Mrs. Lessing so insightfully phrases it, "Fear had shifted its quarters."[2]

After the meeting, both Athen and Thomas make remarks about the present state of world affairs--Athen about the unsettled state of Greece and Thomas about famine, concentration

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[1] IV, 353.

[2] IV, 356.

camp horror, and the bomb. These two men know far better than Martha and Anton that although the war is over officially, its devastation continues. Both men are more capable of exposing themselves to pain than the Hesses. The section ends with Martha thinking, "When I get to England, I'll find a man I can really be married to."[1]

Part two opens with the epigraph from a marriage manual saying that "real love is a question of compromise, tolerance, shared views and tastes, preferably a common background of experience, the small comforts of day to day living. Anything else is just illusion and plain sex."[2] The remark is ironic, for Martha finds a man she can be "really married to," but not in any pedestrian textbook sense. Her affair will be the opposite of the highly touted union of the marriage manual.

What we have been following in part one is a carefully structured section that purposefully lays a slow and steady foundation for Martha's affair. In section one Martha refuses an important job with Mr. Robinson and realizes that she will leave Anton. With these two paths of development blocked, she begins looking around for a man, any man, to have an affair with because she knows she needs one to unify herself. She rejects Solly, and in section two she rejects Joss. By section three Martha knows that the affair will be serious and

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[1] IV, 365. [2] IV, 366.

section four gives the reader an indication of Thomas's deeper understanding of the devastation of war than Martha realizes. Part two develops the affair.

Section one opens with Martha lying in a loft where she and Thomas make love. Before the affair, she had pictured herself in dreams as a house with self-contained rooms that had no unity or center, but "adding a new room [her affair with Thomas] has ended the division. From this centre she now lived." She realizes that her affair with Thomas, now in process, is almost too intense for her because "it was too much of a wrench away from what was easy; much easier to live deprived, to be resigned, to be self-contained. No, she did not want to be dissolved."[1]

The dissolution that Martha feels, while it paradoxically gives her a deeper sense of who she is, also condemns her to live a life quite unlike the life of the self-contained Mrs. Van who has banished emotion from her life. The emotional intensity of Martha and Thomas being together was felt "as if doors were being opened one after another inside their eyes as they looked--how it was that she was being driven by him back and back into regions of herself she had not known existed."[2]

The self-knowledge Martha is coming to, the imagination exerted to make her capable of becoming who she is, is seen as a dissolution. She seems to dissolve herself by walking through

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[1] IV, 367, 368.

[2] IV, 370.

doors back to her real self, that detached observer who watched her going through adolescence, the voice that said Donovan had nothing to do with her, and the warning that, even though she went through with her marriage to Douglas, she would leave him. We are told in Martha Quest that this guide within her was "the gift of her solitary childhood on the veld: that knowledge of something painful and ecstatic, something central and fixed, but flowing. It was a sense of movement, of separate things interacting and becoming one, but greater--it was this which was her lodestone, even her conscience."[1] Participation in pleasure and pain is what creates Martha's journey into her real self. Thomas supplies both.

Section two deals with the readjustments Martha makes in her life to make room for her affair. First, she quits her job, quite easily and without difficulty, but then she complains to Thomas that her women friends come to her apartment every day and bother her when she has work at home to do. Thomas points out that she keeps her friends as insurance against the day the affair ends. What the real self wants, it gets without any difficulty. The other adjustment is more complicated: Anton. The first night Martha makes love to Thomas, Anton makes love to her also, even though they have not made love in months. Although the reasons are seemingly civil and friendly,

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[1] I, 210.

Anton, following an unconscious cue from her, is reasserting his possession. Martha wonders with what part of herself she told Anton she was having an affair.

Thomas tells her she is going against an immutable law with her loose behavior, and her body is reacting to that violation. Man's nerves have not caught up with his principles, but perhaps he will go through a "mutation."[1] Prefiguring the ending of The Four Gated-City, Thomas adds: "There's something new trying to get born through our thick skins. I tell you, Martha, if I see a sane person, then I know he's mad. You know, the householders. It's we who are nearest to being--what's needed." Thomas goes on to say that what has changed, although few people know it, is our time scale. Before, people would measure their lives in terms of an elm tree outside their house and live their lives with a sense of safety; now people measure time by stars, which are on a different time scale from man. This shift in time with its attendant lack of safety leads Thomas to conclude: "And that's why you'are all on edge and why I'm sick."[2]

In section two, then, we see that Martha's love affair is introducing her to ideas which will be developed at length in The Four-Gated City. There will be a conscious development of the way people "talk" to each other nonverbally; a mutation

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[1] IV, 385.

[2] IV, 385, 386.

taking place; unsafe people being "what's needed." All of these ideas, so central to Martha becoming herself, are introduced by Thomas, another indication of the importance of that love affair for Martha.

In section three Martha attends a meeting of an African group at Johnny Lindsay's. Distrust between black and white arises indicating a wide breach between the two groups. All political attempts at action fall apart because the racist compartmentalization of the past can not be bridged.

After the meeting, Martha, Thomas, Athen, Maisie, Millicent (Anton's girl), and Anton go dancing at one of the hotels out of town. Athen tries to tell Martha, by using words, about the horror of the war: "The last five years, I tell you I can't grasp it. I lie awake at night and I repeat just small things. I say, 'There are two million people in Europe now without homes.' People like you and me, Martha. I keep trying to imagine it." Athen asks Martha: "Tell me, Martha, have you thought at all--have you thought about this war?" Martha can only reply to his intense question, "Obviously not, when you ask like that."[1]

But at the hotel that evening, Martha experiences through Thomas a sense of the horror of the war that will leave her open to contemplate more fully its horrors. In

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[1] IV, 398.

the midst of flaming braziers lighting the outside tables, the copious wine, and the starry night, Thomas sees a man he used to work for in the army: Sergeant Tressell, who, through sheer good-hearted carelessness, made life miserable, and, worse, dangerous for the Africans under his command. Thomas hates him still and would like to murder him. A confrontation is avoided, but Martha has seen a side of Thomas she has never seen before. Before she had seen him as a gardener and a businessman, but the implication is that the war and the experiences Thomas went through with Tressell have created a different fate for him. His hatred of all the Tressells has been aroused and it is difficult, indeed impossible, for him to settle down as a businessman.

In section four Anton tries again to have Martha remain married with him, but apart from being agreeable to waiting until his naturalization papers come through, Martha knows she will not stay with him. The conversation was triggered by Martha's announcement that she was going on a two-day trip with Jack Dobie to do some research and to have lunch on Thomas Stern's farm. On the way to the farm, Martha comments to Jack in a way she could not to Athen, "It really is funny how we've gone back to talking as if the war didn't happen. . . . I don't mean saying things about it--like the war has done a lot of damage, or it will take ten years to restore agriculture

in the Ukraine or something, I mean, really feeling things are different."[1]

Life is, of course, different for almost every major character in the entire series. The children of violence have had, not only their lives, but their psyches dislocated. Thomas says, "I'm the norm now. I told you, the elm tree and safety's finished. Who is the freak, the unusual person? The man who is born in X, who goes to school in X, who marries a person from X, or perhaps from Y, and who dies in his bed in X." The force that Martha feels when she and Thomas love each other, which neither of them can explain may be this: "Perhaps, when Thomas and she touched each other, in the touch cried out the murdered flesh of the millions of Europe--the squandered flesh was having its revenge, it cried out through the two little creatures who were fitted for much smaller loves, the touch only of a hand on a shoulder, simple hungers, and the kindness of sleep. Instead--it was all much too painful, and they had to separate."[2] It is this dislocation of the psyche that creates the possibility of evolving.

At the luncheon at the Stern farm, Martha witnesses an important scene between Thomas and his little girl Ester. He stands in his garden and reaches out his hand toward her, but the delicate child, like her mother, recoils from and rejects

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[1] IV, 426.

[2] IV, 437, 428.

this plea for love that peasant Thomas offers. It is too much for her. When Martha and Thomas are back in town making love, Thomas explains that his wife Rachel was a daughter of a professor and that he met her only because of their Communist activities. Thomas knew the war was coming, so he and Rachel got out of Poland before it started. Now, all the relatives of both families are dead. Rachel is grateful to Thomas for all he has done, but she leaves seventy per cent of Thomas "out of account."[1] The combination of his relationship with the wife and daughter, his being pushed into the role of successful businessman, the news of the concentration camps, and his hatred for man represented by Tressell make him think he is coming to the end of something in himself, something about which he can do nothing. The last section of part three ends with the ominous note that Thomas wants to go visit Israel, but he does not know why.

The epigraph to part three, from St. Polycarp, "My God, in what a century you have caused me to live!"[2] reinforces Martha's increasing awareness of the madness of her age. It indicates also that Martha's personal development is taking her out of the rigid ideological shell she has built around herself in A Ripple from the Storm. The change she is going through reminds us of the change in Pietro Spina, alias Don Pedro, in

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[1] IV, 436.

[2] Iv, 438.

Ignazio Silone's Bread and Wine:

> Don Paolo put on his hat and coat and took refuge in the street, although it was raining. He remembered a visit he had paid to the sewers of Paris. He felt he had been visiting a sewer now. He had always instinctively avoided penetrating man's individual troubles and secrets--perhaps because he feared that the rather simple idea he had formed of human sufferings and their solution might be destroyed in the process; perhaps, also, because he was afraid of being confronted with sufferings that had no solution. Uliva's trenchant judgment of him suddenly returned to his mind. "You are afraid of the truth. You force yourself to believe in progress, to be an optimist and a revolutionary, because you are terrified of the opposite."[1]

Martha's growing awareness of the suffering in the world, because of her contact with Thomas, increases her sense of who she is and makes her less and less doctrinaire.

In section one Martha goes to meet an African group because Joss wrote and said that Solly was up to no good. But Solly has already poisoned the Africans' minds against the Communists, so Martha is helpless and can not reach these Africans. This helplessness on the collective level parallels the helplessness of individuals at certain points in their lives, especially Thomas.

In section two, Jasmine comes for a visit (she has moved down South) with the information for Solly and the group that the police know about the Africans and are prepared to

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[1] Ignazio Silone, Bread and Wine, trans. by Gwenda David and Eric Mosbacher (New American Library: New York, 1959), pp. 216-217.

arrest the leaders. Later, Thomas tells Martha that the police visited his farm, thinking that because his name is Stern, and his wife was visiting Israel, he must be associated with the Stern gang that were killing British officers in Israel. He adds that Tressell is on the police force now. Martha realizes that she has not seen Thomas's life as a whole before this because "there had been a failure of imagination, a failure of sympathy."[1] Thomas announces he is off to Israel and the two part.

Section three follows Martha on a night walk through town to her parents' home where she stands like a spy and looks into their bedroom window. The narration of this section makes imaginative ties between some imagery and ideas that are dominant in the series. First, Martha stands under a street light and thinks of the old Quest home on the veld, now destroyed. Her thought expands to the city being destroyed by dust. The destruction moves out further and Martha tries, like Athen before her or something like Dr. Rieux in Camus's The Plague, to imagine what it means to say the forty-four million people died during the war.

This effort of imagination leads her to recall another effort of imagination. She recalls what Thomas has written to her about an old Rabbi from whom Thomas wanted to take science.

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[1] IV, 454.

The Rabbi replied: "For most people, Copernicus is not yet born. I tell you, you want to learn science? Then every morning you wake and think: The sun is a great mass of white light, and in the sun's light a dozen small particles of substance spin around. You live in a small bit of sun-substance and you spin around the sun. Now feel it." Thomas's teacher said it was a matter of evolution and that "the next thing for man was to feel the stars and their times and their spaces."[1]

Following this discussion of man's stretching himself to feel the devastation of the war and the enormity of the universe is the announcement: "A person who has gone away is still here as long as one can hear what he says; Martha could hear what Thomas said."[2] This announcement is so casual that the reader may even ignore it, but its juxtapositional relationship to the previous conversation has a causal relation. If one can stretch his imagination--and the horrible events of the twentieth century and man's increasing awareness of the vastness of the universe force him into this effort--then one can develop new powers of communication.

What Martha and Thomas discuss is the question of violence, for Martha has now realized that Thomas went to Israel to "get his own back on Sergeant Tressell." Martha does not believe in violence, but "was the essence of violence, she had

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[1]IV, 459, 460.

[2]IV, 460.

been conceived, bred, fed and reared on violence." In fact, not only is Martha the essence of violence, but "the soul of the human race, that part of the mind which has no name . . . which holds the human race as frogspawn is held in jelly . . . was part of a twist and damage--she could no more disassociate herself from the violence done her, than a tadpole can live out of water." Martha's inability to escape the violence she so detests manifests itself in her hatred of the Quests' dog who arouses in her "waves of pure red hate." Martha also wishes her father were dead, and "the house was more than ever like a nightmare, all her most private nightmares were made tangible there."[1]

Time, space, evolution, violence: all these themes are interwoven in this slim section. The murder of forty-four million people during the War becomes directly linked with Thomas's wanting to kill someone in Israel down to Martha's violence directed toward her parents' dog. Lying in the background, like galaxies in the universe, is the tentative seedling of an answer: the possibility of man evolving beyond his present pre-Copernican state. That Martha is talking to Thomas, even though he is not present, is mentioned casually, but in light of the following development of this evolutionary thrust, such

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[1]IV, 461, 462, 463, 464, 464.

a conversation is significant, especially, placed as it is, in a context of violence.

This "feeling of the stars, their times and spaces" and the attempt to imagine the war have both negative and positive consequences. On the negative side, these attempts, both so far removed from ordinary human safety, create a terror within us and open us more to the impulses of terror within the universe. In The Golden Notebook Anna Wulf remarks, "I knew, but of course the word written can not convey the quality of this knowledge, that whatever already is has its logic and its force, that the great armouries of the world have their inner force, and that my terror, the real nerve terror of the nightmare, was part of the force."[1] Thomas Stern, too, is caught up in the terrifying violence of "that part of the mind which has no name."

But the positive side of this feeling of the stars and awareness of violence is that the soul of the human race is becoming increasingly expanded. In writing about man's new awareness of the vastness of the universe, Teilhard de Chardin says:

> It is impossible to accede to a fundamentally new environment without experiencing the inner terrors of a metamorphosis. The child is terrified when it opens its

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[1]Doris Lessing, The Golden Notebook (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968), p. 589.

> eyes for the first time. Similarly, for our mind to adjust itself to lines and horizons enlarged beyond measure, it must renounce the comfort of familiar narrowness. It must create a new equilibrium for everything that had formerly been so neatly arranged in its small inner world. . . . The whole psychology of modern disquiet is linked with the sudden confrontation of space-time.[1]

Teilhard goes on to speak to those who do not see man as evolving:

> "There is nothing new under the sun" say the despairing. But what about you, O thinking man? Unless you repudiate reflection, you must admit that you have climbed a step higher than the animals. "Very well, but at least nothing has changed and nothing is changing any longer since the beginning of history." In that case, O man of the twentieth century, how does it happen that you are waking up to horizons and are susceptible to fears that your forefathers never knew?"[2]

Man's increasing consciousness, fed by his growing awareness of time and space, creates a modern dislocation. But, in turn, this dislocation is the forerunner of an expanding consciousness that is, in Thomas's words, "what's needed." Those people whose lives have been distorted by the violence of war or those who are capable of imagining the limitlessness of the universe are precisely those people who sense the expansion of the universe and the human soul. They are the ones who will come to a new kind of knowledge, a new way of knowing that will transcend man's present compartmentalization. Because the age

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[1] The Phenomenon of Man (Harper & Brothers: New York, 1959), p. 225.

[2] Ibid., p. 227.

of safety is gone, man will be forced to recognize his mortality, that is, his essential nature, and no longer will his lack of self-knowledge catch him up in patterns of behavior that have such monstrous collective consequences.

In section four Thomas returns, and Martha runs into him quite by accident at the local restaurant. He is now doing some fact-finding on hygenic conditions on the Resevoirs for Jack Dobie, and he and Martha have little that is personal to say to one another. But Martha has dreamed that Thomas is going to be hanged and saw a look in his eyes which she can not decipher, but knows it is important. Martha is back working at home, with her married women friends dropping in, women "neurotic with dissatisfaction, just as if they had never made resolutions not to succumb to the colonial smalltown atmosphere. And the terrible thing was, they could never forget it; they watched their own deterioration like merciless onlookers. . . . They are hypnotized into futility by self-observation. It is as if self-consciousness itself has speeded up the process, a curve of destruction."[1] This self-consciousness speeding up the curve of destruction is what is happening to Thomas, too, but Martha remains unaware of what is happening to him, and therefore can not help.

The epigraph of part four indicates the kind of

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[1] IV, 472.

difficulty man is in with only his limited knowledge or, once again, the compartmentalization of reality. Taken again from Idries Shah's The Sufis, the epigraph is an anecdote about a man who asks his wife whether or not he is dead. His wife assures him that if he were dead, his hands and feet would be cold. Shortly afterwards the man is in the forest. When he notices that his hands and feet are cold, he lies down under a tree and lets a pack of wolves attack his donkey. The man cries out, "If I had been alive I would not have allowed you to take liberties with my donkey."[1] Part four deals with death: Mr. Quest, Thomas, Athen, Johnny Lindsay, and Martha is unable to deal in any effective manner with any of these deaths.

Section one opens with naturalization papers for Anton and Martha arriving and Martha thinking about the entirely different experience of being married to Anton and being with Thomas. She runs into Thomas at a group meeting called to help the Africans and to discuss a book about Stalinism. Thomas says, "The Soviet Union's always been the same--it's we who change,"[2] and one is reminded of how much Martha has changed through her affair with Thomas. We are reminded also of Solly telling the group about Stalin atrocities years ago, but no one, including Martha, would listen. Apparently, the

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[1] IV, 479.

[2] IV, 492.

collective life of man has always been mad and cruel, but the individual can become more sane.

Section two opens with a scene of individual madness or limited knowledge. Martha's mother had spent the night tossing and turning, worrying about Martha's coming trip to England. The following morning she collected all the old keys she could find and gave them to Martha for her trip. Martha sits staring at this crazy present and thinks about the crazy situations Mrs. Quest, like the man who thought he was dead, creates without ever being responsible for them: loving her dog Kaiser like a baby; leaving Caroline alone with an old, dying man; letting Martha see Caroline even though the two are not supposed to meet. Martha wonders, too, about her past madness, or limited knowledge, in thinking that she was freeing Caroline when she was left with Douglas. Martha's next duty is to try and stop the mad Solly from sending letters in the mail discussing the coming Kaffir strike.

And, in section three, without Solly or anyone in the group knowing anything about it, the Kaffirs do call a strike, over which the white community explodes into a collective madness spurred on by newspaper headlines that read "Strike, Total Strike, National Strike, Threat, Danger, Alarm" while theoretically urging the good white folk of Zambesia to keep calm.[1]

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[1] IV, 518.

The newspapers sound as responsible for their actions as Mrs. Quest does for hers. Mrs. Van and Mrs. Maynard, as an "unconstituted committee," decide that the best way to handle the so-called strike is to lock up the strikers and guard them against white non-strikers. In a mad reversal, the police protect the hated black help.

There is a flashback in this section that focuses on the death and burial of Mr. Quest, but of the death of Thomas, very little is said, except that Martha realizes the half-mad Thomas wanted death. Martha expresses no grief, so that the effect of the long description of the death and wake of Mr. Quest appears to be some kind of emotional displacement for Martha. The remainder of the section deals with the death of Johnny Lindsay. Martha goes to Maisie's where the Maynards are clucking over Rita and worrying about the women's safety during the national disaster when everyone is supposed to keep calm. On Maisie's mirror is a postcard from Athen's friends in Greece informing Maisie that Athen died in prison, presumably for fighting with the revolutionaries. When the Maynards leave, Maisie informs Martha that Flora, Johnny's woman, has a message for Mrs. Van about Johnny. Through a series of mixups, Johnny dies absurdly alone on the street, either on his way to get help for the kaffirs in the Location who are running out of food, or else to look for Flora.

In the final section, Martha's divorce finally comes through. She also helps edit two manuscripts, one a life of Johnny Lindsay with Mrs. Van who can not understand why Johnny loved Flora so much. The other manuscript, Thomas's, Martha does not understand, for written over what was supposed to be a survey are notes in red pencil of a dying madman. Nor do the group of younger socialists who call a meeting to which they invite the old guard--Marjorie Black, Jasmine, Martha--understand Martha's silent warning to them. Nor does Jasmine understand the real political situation in South Africa when she predicts at novel's end that the Nationalists will be thrown out of South Africa and socialism will be established in five years because the present government is so bad that it can not last.

Just as the man in the epigraph does not know how to tell if he is dead or alive, Martha ends Landlocked dreaming for a new life, leaving behind her death, dissolution, and misunderstanding, but not certain what it is she is looking for.

The Four-Gated City

The dedication to The Four-Gated City is an anecdote from The Way of the Sufi by Idries Shah. A fool was sent to buy flour and salt, instructed by his master to keep the two separate. Because the fool inverted the dish to keep the

salt separate from the flour, the flour was lost. Then when he again inverted the dish to show his master where the flour was, the salt was spilled out also. The homily is clear. If man continues to compartmentalize his life, trying to keep separate his emotions from his reason, or "political" facts from "psychological" ones--just to make explicit some of the compartmentalization and fragmentation that occurs in modern life--he will surely be lost. If, however, he attempts to integrate those parts of his life and see them in a totality, he may avoid perishing in a world which grows daily more dangerous to all life. The entire attempt of The Four-Gated City is a reconciliation and integration of the forces of life that Martha Quest responds to, both personally and collectively.

The epigraph to part one is taken from Rachel Carson's The Edge of the Sea, explaining that the coast of the Florida Keys is an "uneasy equilibrium of land and water masses."[1] Within the currents of the eddying waters floats a green seedling already sending out roots which will eventually increase the land mass. In part one, Martha Quest will be seen as having the seedling of a new life and the new mutating powers within her which will be developed more explicitly in later parts of the novel.

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[1]V, 2.

Section one recapitulates many of the ideas found in the two opening sections of part one of Martha Quest. Martha is alone in London, and just as a girl on the veld capable of playing the role of young girl to her mother and Mrs. Van Rensberg, the town Martha on the loose, essentially rootless but grown more mature, is able to play any role required of her by whomever she meets. So to a man on the train she can turn into a widow from Birmingham, and to Iris and Jimmy, an unmarried lower-middle class couple with whom she is staying, she turns, once again, into "Matty":

> rather amusing, outspoken, competently incompetent, free from convention, free to say what other people did not say: yet always conscious of, and making a burnt offering of, these qualities. "Matty" gained freedom from whatever other people must conform to not so much by ignoring it, but, when the point was reached when conformity might be expected, by gaining exemption in an act of deliberate clumsiness--like a parody, paying homage as a parody does to its parent-action. An obsequiousness, in fact, an obeisance.[1]

This persona, or role-playing, is immediately related to man's collective history, for the narration continues that this parody granted exemption to the jester in court, fashioned the way African labourers reacted to their boss, and created a way of behavior in concentration camps--a mask, in short, paraded by all peoples whose situations forced them into this grotesquerie in order to survive, or used by people who could be free from it if they knew who they were underneath that mask.

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[1] V, pp. 4-5.

And just as the young Martha sensed the divisions among the white people of Zambesia--the tensions, for example, that existed between the Afrikaaners and the British--so the mature Martha can comprehend the tremendous gulf between the lower middle class, represented by Iris and Jimmy--and Stella, another woman with whom Martha stayed--and the upper middle class which controls the newspapers, left, right, and center. Martha realizes that what is said in the papers about the current Labour Government and their analysis of what is wrong with Britain is totally false and unrealistic. Further, that the change the newspapers are reacting to with such horror has not in any way reached down into the lives of the people the Labour Government is supposed to be representing. Iris, Jimmy, and Stella are not, for example, "rotted by ease."[1] Martha tries to explain her position to a member of the ruling class, Henry Matheson (a friend of the Maynards, naturally), by pointing out to him that he is spending more on the meal he is treating her to than poor people spend in a week. Henry reacts to the word "poor," by replying, "Well, aren't we all, these days?"[2]

Although the mature Martha can do nothing about collective blindness and role-playing, she is now capable of doing something about her individual role-playing. She is capable

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[1] V, 15. [2] V, 28.

of calling Iris and Jimmy and talking to them without using her "Matty" mask. She can break out of roles, now, the way a free person can. She tells them she is leaving them and will be by to pick up her bags soon.

After dinner with Henry Matheson, whom she refuses to work for, Martha has another experience which recalls the adolescent Martha. She has an illumination which temporarily ends her feeling of division. She walks until her mind becomes a "soft dark empty space."[1] Behind it, an idiot voice sings the song, "The best things in life are free," telling Martha she must get a job and settle down. Then she hears a song about Jack, the man she is going to visit: "Jack fell down and broke his crown." The message is that Jack, living a completely free life, much like the one Martha has been living since she arrived in London three months ago, is paying too high a price and will one day crack. This song reinforces Martha's awareness that she must settle down because she has "debts to pay,"[2] not monetary, but personal.[3]

Martha is not entirely free as yet, not entirely herself. But coming to London and living this free life has given her many of the intimations she had as a girl on the veld.

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[1] V, 36. [2] V, 38.

[3] Another song tells her this also: "Mother, must I go on dancing? Yes, my darling daughter."

Although she hates to give up the illuminations she has with this free life, she wants to remember that "these places exist"[1] in her mind, even if she forgets about them afterwards.

After this analysis of the individual and the collective compartmentalizations, masks, and falsities (but again followed by a possible way out through illuminations), the section ends with Martha calling Phoebe Coldridge, Marjorie Black's older sister, to set up an appointment for lunch. Phoebe will help Martha get a job.

What is reinforced in section two is Martha's illuminations, only this time another medium is used to get her there--sex with Jack.

Jack's life had been hard. Born on a farm in South Africa, he had a father who beat him and raped his sisters. During the war, Jack's ship was torpedoed, leaving the helpless sailor in the water for twelve hours while commanding his hand to hold on to his wounded shoulder. About the hatred Jack periodically feels (and uses sex to combat), he says, "If you can get beyond I hate,--then you find, there is hatred, always there. You can say, I am going into hatred now, it's just a force." When Jack and Martha make love, there is present "a power, a force, which, held and controlled, took both up and over and away from any ordinary consciousness into—

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[1] V, 39.

an area where words could be of no use."[1]

Martha goes to the "same place" where she went while walking around London, only this time she does not hear songs, but sees pictures. She sees two: one of a golden family surrounded by wild animals, now tame. The other picture is of another family--neurotic and wretched--living in a large "layered"[2] house.

After the love-making, Martha returns to normal, which is "a condition of disparateness." Martha talks to Jack, saying:

> "Babies are born into this, what there is. A baby is born with infinite possibilities for being good. But there's no escaping it, it's like having to go down into a pit, a terrible dark blind pit, and then you fight your way up and out: and your parents are part of it, of what you fight out of."[3]

Another conversation Jack and Martha have is about the decision-making process. Martha maintains that "we think we've made decisions--it's something else that makes them."[4]

As we shall see in the following section, the "layered" house that Martha's second picture presents is the Coldridge house where she decides to work. The golden family picture is, of course, the ideal, but, as Martha's conversation goes on to point out in Wordsworthian fashion, babies must go into a dark pit before they can recapture their infinite possibilities for

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[1] V, 58, 59.

[2] V, 59.

[3] V, 68.

[4] V, 70.

being good. This "dark Pit" reminds us of Martha's saurian dream in A Ripple from the Storm which represents the past, which, unknown to Martha at this time, she will have to work through before becoming herself. The conversation about decisions tells us that a part of Martha has already decided to take the job she has not yet been offered.

In section three Martha meets Phoebe Coldridge, staunch Labour Party worker and ex-wife of Arthur Coldridge, another Labour Party leader. When Phoebe asks Martha how she likes London, Martha thinks that "this was a country where people could not communicate across the dark that separated them" and this collective thought is followed immediately by its twin on the individual level "there was something in the human mind that separated, and divided." Phoebe then takes Martha to meet Mark Coldridge, Arthur's brother and a writer, to see if Martha wants to work for him. The situation is a complicated one: Mark's wife Lynda is in a mental institution, their son Francis is an unhappy child who can not communicate very well with his father, and Mark's mother Margaret Patten drops in occasionally and domineers. Martha goes back to Jack's thinking about the job and saying: "I want to live in such a way that I don't just--turn into a hypnotised animal."[1] But the section ends with Martha calling Mark and moving in.

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[1]V, 79, 79, 94.

If the challenge on the individual level is not to live like a hypnotized animal, the challenge for the Coldridge family on the collective level is to survive the Cold War atmosphere that has set in. Part of the Coldridge family meets in section four at Mark's for a dinner on Christmas Day. Mark's brother Colin and Sarah-Sally Coldridge are there with their son Paul. Colin is a Physics Professor at Cambridge whose ex-boss has been accused of giving scientific secrets to the Russians. Since Colin will not repudiate his former supervisor, Colin himself is under suspicion. This tension has an unsettling effect on his wife, Sarah, a Jewess whose family was killed during World War II, and whom the Coldridge family insists on calling "Sally," the gentile form of her name.

What relieves this collective tension is a conversation Mark and Martha have some months later. In reply to Mark's remark that Martha always assumes there is another way of living, Martha says, "I don't want to have to split myself up."[1] Then Mark proceeds to tell her about the mythical city she has been searching for. The discussion of the city gets so long and interesting that Mark turns it into a short novel.

But dreams of the fair city do not keep the Cold War from rising. Colin's boss gets sentenced and hanged, and repression is on the way, caught like a deadly germ from America.

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[1] V, 132.

Margaret Patten, upset by Colin's unwillingness to repudiate his former boss, still tries to live normally, an attempt which includes holding an election day party at Mark's. In the course of the party, Mark comes in with Sally-Sarah and quietly announces to Martha that Colin has defected to the Soviet Union. The following night, Sally-Sarah slips out of the house, returns to Cambridge, and commits suicide. Not hyperbolically, Mark concludes, "I think it's going to be a bad time."[1]

Part two begins with an epigraph from Robert Musil's The Man Without Qualities:

> However, the Man Without Qualities was now thinking. From this conclusion may be drawn that it was at least partly not a personal matter. What then was it? The world going in and out, aspects of the world falling into shape inside a head.[2]

What this Man Without Qualities thinks about is water, in all its various aspects, its mass, its relationship to religions old and new, its qualities and properties, and its physiology. Musil concludes:

> Ultimately the whole thing dissolved into systems of formulae that were all somehow connected with each other, and in the whole wide world there were only a few dozen people who thought alike about even as simple a thing as water; all the rest talked about it in languages that were at home somewhere between today and several thousands of years ago.[3]

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[1] V, 132.

[2] V, 148.

[3] V, 148.

The human personality is at least equally as complicated as water, and Martha, in this section, will get to know herself with increasing precision. She will also get intimations that feelings and thoughts, once the ego is transcended, are as impersonal as Musil suggests--much like Jack's remark that beyond the "I hate, there is hatred." (We should notice, also, that section one's epigraph began with earth, the new seedling starting its growth. This section begins with water; the next discusses air and finally, in the last part, there are comments about living cells and their capacities.)

The first section, however, merely furthers the narration. With reporters surrounding the house, waiting for Mark to repudiate his brother Colin's defection, Mark, Martha, and Paul become virtual prisoners. Neither of the adults wants to tell the excited son that his mother is dead, so a reporter, Miles Tangin, unknowingly tells him on his sixth birthday, the day Paul expected his mother to return with presents. Later, Mark puts Paul in boarding school and nearly collapses, for as a Coldridge and a member of the ruling elite of the United Kingdom, he simply can not believe what is happening to him, that his country could prove to be so much like the United States or the Soviet Union during the Cold War period. Mark's collective insight is coupled with Paul's personal dismay over his mother's death.

Meanwhile, bills pile up, and in an effort to save money Lynda moves into a newly fixed-up basement apartment in the house with her friend, Dorothy Quentin. While she is home one weekend when Paul is visiting, she is able to give him some kind of comfort that neither Mark nor Martha can, but the section ends with the ironic narrational comment: "In short, having Lynda back in the basement, with a friend who had money and would pay some rent, would make a difference to the finances of the household; but not too much else."[1]

In section two Martha is still occasionally thinking of leaving the house, especially when she visits Harold and Mary Butts, the Coldridges' servants for many past years, in their simple cottage in the country, but the thought of the new atomic weapons being developed some ten miles away makes her forget such dreams of escape. Here, the urgency of Martha's finding herself becomes linked to the threat of the atomic world, for such formidable weaponry demands self-knowledge.

Mark is visited by, supposedly, an old friend of his dead brother James, but discovers to his horror that this man was actually sent to spy on him, to see what he knows about the Communist Party. The horror of someone using friendship in such a way converts Mark to Marxism, for once he sees the chicanery of his own government, he looks for a change. Martha

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[1]V, 169.

sees his conversion as identical to the one she went through ten years ago and realizes that Mark "walked into a personality (or, if you like, a state of mind) and he was inhabiting it." In their previous discussions Mark had been cynical and Martha would play the role of Defender, but now, "they had changed roles."[1]

Martha watches the members of the house play their different roles, indicating the compartmentalization that exists within people. Apart from being the Defender, Mark has other roles also: he is feudal with the Buttses, Lynda's patient husband, father to Francis and Paul. Francis, too, shifts roles during this period. Out of his suffering over his father's suspicion by the government, Francis turns into "the Clown," a distant relation to "Matty."

This compartmentalization goes on on the collective level also, but the relationship between what is observed and how it relates to the collective situation is as yet noticed. It seems that Dorothy, Lynda's roommate, is in charge of the little basement apartment and gets involved in long complicated harangues with "the machinery of the outside world"[2] over something like a leaky tap or a new telephone book that should have been delivered.

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[1] V, 175, 175.

[2] V, 182.

Perhaps the key to the divisive situation, and, indeed, to Mrs. Lessing's attitude toward learning to see interrelationships between apparently unconnected data comes from the mouth of Mrs. Mellindip, a friend of Dorothy's and Lynda's who earns her living by reading horoscopes. When Martha tells the fortune teller after a palm reading that nothing had been learned, Mrs. Mellindip replies: "Well, dear, I could tell you more if you knew it."[1]

But one thing Martha does discover about herself before the section ends is how to stop "hating a younger self." For Martha slowly recognizes that hating Mark in his new socialist phase and Patty Samuels, his lover and a dedicated Communist, is her way of rejecting one of her younger incarnations. Martha knows that if she can not reconcile herself to her younger self, she may have to live through her Communist phase over again, or else it will "emerge in ogreish disguises she could not imagine." This point of reconciliation is Martha's growing point. "Brought again and again by herself to that point in her where she had to untie knots of violent emotions, she shied away, baulked."[2]

One day, after having a nightmare about Patty Samuels, Martha wakes and decides to be pleasant to Patty, and "a stiffness went from her face; muscles went loose all over her body

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[1] V, 190.

[2] V, 194, 194, 194.

that she had not known were knotted."[1] The section closes with a contrast of Martha and Patty, because as Martha learns to accept her past rather than be forced to repeat it, Patty is steadily becoming more and more tense about life, refusing to learn what it is life wants to teach her.

And section three deals with Martha's learning to accept an even younger phase of her life: her past as an unloved child. And just as Patty Samuels represented what Martha feared, now Lynda and Dorothy in the basement represent what she fears.

In section one the Cold War reaches its most vitriolic point, but its viciousness is really a prelude to its end, ushered in by publication of Mark's A City in the Desert. These bad and threatening political times are balanced by a personal threat to Martha that sends her shaking to bed: Mrs. Quest writes a letter saying she is coming for a visit.

Martha is in terrible shape. She can hardly get out of bed; she rereads four years of Mrs. Quest's miserable letters and can barely stand the pain. She tries to remember Thomas's voice, but can not, and she realizes that she can remember very little of her past. She tries to remember herself as a girl on the kopje, as married to Douglas Knowell, to Anton Hesse, then Thomas, then "her father's long illness; her mother--ah yes,

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[1] V, 194.

here it was, and she knew it. She had been blocking off the pain, and had blocked off half her life with it."[1] At this time Martha feels as if "the basement flat, its occupants, were isolating themselves in her mind, as if it was a territory full of alien people from whom she had to protect herself, with whom she could have no connection."[2]

To help herself, Martha reads shopping basketsful of books on psychiatry and discovers one essential fact: "That these practitioners of a science, or an art, agreed about absolutely nothing."[3] The danger that Martha will fall victim to a rigid ideology, the way she did when she became converted to Communism, does not exist.

But, in spite of her readings and Lynda's warnings, Martha makes an appointment to see Dr. Lamb, the family psychiatrist. In the meantime she reconstructs her past. She starts with Thomas in the loft, works her way out into the street, encounters the people who filled her life. Martha is now, and always has been, a number of people, the most important one and the one which is essentially her is the Martha who watches. It is this Martha that can force herself to remember the most painful memories of her past. She realizes that "somewhere a long way back, beyond where she could reach

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[1] V, 207.

[2] V, 211.

[3] V, 222, 222.

with memory, an angry fighting resentful Martha had been born. It was the result of a battle against pity. Pity, a long time ago, had been an enemy. Pity could have destroyed." Martha had to fight her mother to survive, but now this fighting for Martha was no longer needed. "What Dr. Lamb must do for her was to give her back pity, the strength to hold it, and not be destroyed by it. She must be able, when her mother came, to pity her, to love her, to cherish her, and not be destroyed."[1]

Although Dr. Lamb gives Martha the chance to hear in a different way what her life had always been saying, he also makes her explode with anger in such a way that she is so filled with lethargy before and after her visits that she can not continue reconstructing her life on her own.

He also diagnoses her as a manic-depressive with schizoid tendencies, one of Lynda's many diagnoses. But Martha protests, "The best part of me" is the person who watches. "The only part that is real--that's permanent anyway."[2] Still, when she makes love to Mark, which she is now doing because of a need for tenderness, she wishes the person who watched would go away.

The following section leaves Martha and picks up Mrs. Quest, who is staying with friends on the coast, getting herself

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[1]V, 222. [2]V, 227.

prepared for the coming visit. The section follows her through her visit on the coast, reminiscences of her staying with her son and daughter-in-law on the farm, her involvement with a twelve-year-old native servant Stephen, her trip on the ship to England, and finally her visit with Martha. In this section the reader does take pity on Mrs. Quest, a woman whose life has brought her so little of what she wanted, if she ever knew what it was she did want. Sexually frigid, unaware of who she is, nurse and wife of a sick man living away from the sea which she claimed she always loved, remorseful, angry, abusive but incapable of seeing herself except in the most inappropriate religious cliches, she has focused her life of unrecognized resentment on her daughter Martha, with whom she "unaccountably" explodes. When she finally leaves, she says to Martha at the airport bus terminal, "Well, I wonder what all that was about really?" Martha replies, "So do I."[1]

It is in this section, then, that Martha goes down into the dark pit of her past and faces up to the pain hidden there that she has tried for so many years to escape. And, as one of the inmates of a mental hospital puts it, she "gets her memory back." Martha is ready for more development.

Part three opens with an epigraph on various remarks about the weather, taken, we are told, "from school textbooks."[2]

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[1] V, 273.

[2] V, 276.

These remarks about the weather are written in a style that makes us consider that Mrs. Lessing wrote them herself, for the apparent purpose of the epigraph is to equate the concatenation of events that causes rain with the nature of an individual's participation in the forces of thought and feeling.

Air, we are told, is "an ocean in which we are submerged," and these currents eddy, swirl, and flow, while "masses as homogeneous as whales sink and rise." Gaseous nitrogen, comprising seventy-eight per cent of air, is "shocked into chemical existence by the action of lightning," which causes rain. Lightning itself is just "a spark" bridging cloud and cloud or earth and cloud. For lightning to strike, one place must be positively charged, another negatively. This drama of the commencement of rain takes place miles above our heads and "earth is host to rain which is suspended in air where fire is implicit in the separation of cloud and earth masses."[1]

The equation to the human and impersonal psyche, or soul, seems to work something like this. Air is the human soul in which there are "masses as homogeneous as whales." These masses are forces, much like the force of hatred Jack talked about when he said, "Beyond I hate, there is hatred, always there. You can say, I am going into hatred now, it's

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[1] V, 276.

just a force." Or, one can think of these masses as kinds of personalities that one can inhabit or walk into, the way Mark walked into his Communist personality. The lightning which creates nitrogen, necessary for life and rain, is a spark, in the same way that emotion acts as a conductor for lifting Martha out of her normal state into an illumination. The spark can come from sex or simply a highly charged state of mind. In this section, we will watch Lynda give off to Mark a force which he communicates to Martha through sex. It is these forces and their significance that are examined in parts three and four. But the implicit metaphor is the existence of a collective human soul, twisted and warped by the war as we saw in Landlocked and implied in Musil's statement that thinking is not entirely a personal matter, that is the basis for the possibility of people hearing each other's thoughts (they are tuned into, the way hatred is tuned into), dreaming about, or predicting the future, seeing and hearing phenomena not immediately perceptible to the senses. In fact, this collective human spirit or soul seems to be the underlying premise of the remainder of The Four-Gated City.

Although Mrs. Lessing is not especially impressed with the thought of Teilhard de Chardin,[1] we can, in an academic way,

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[1]From a taped interview with Joseph Haas of The Chicago Daily News, March, 1969.

point out the similarities between what she and Teilhard are saying. Teilhard, for instance, talks of mega-synthesis as "the 'super-arrangement' to which all the thinking elements of the earth find themselves today individually and collectively subject." He also says:

> By effect of reflection and the recoils it involves, the loose ends have been tied up, and the noosphere tends to constitute a single closed system in which each element sees, feels, desires and suffers for itself the same things as all the others at the same time.
>
> We are faced with a harmonised collectivity of consciousnesses equivalent to a sort of super-consciousness. The idea is that of the earth not only becoming covered by myriads of grains of thought, but becoming enclosed in a single thinking envelope so as to form, functionally, no more than a single vast grain of thought on the sidereal scale, the plurality of individual reflections grouping themselves together and reinforcing one another in the act of a single unanimous reflection.[1]

This mega-synthesis, or noosphere, or thinking envelope, or, as he says elsewhere, "concurrence of human monads,"[2] seems analogous to the human soul Mrs. Lessing talks about.

The purpose of this rather lengthy discussion of the epigraph is to prepare the reader for the surprising events which begin to occur in this part of the novel and which expand even more fully in the last part.

Section one opens quietly with a discussion of the watershed year 1956, the cooling off of the Cold War.

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[1] Teilhard de Chardin, op.cit., p. 244, p. 251.

[2] Ibid., p. 261.

characteristic of this relaxed attitude both individually and collectively is the remark: "it seems that any battle must win more than the territory that is being fought over." The remark, although applied to Martha's victory over her mother, her buried pain and her lost memory, could apply equally as well to the collective, especially manifested by Mark. After surviving the disapprobation of his country, the social ostracism, and the reverse thinking that switched his thoughts from a cynical but loyal Englishman to a firebrand Marxist, Mark, now rid of any illusions either right or left, is capable of viewing the real events of the world without a distorting filter of propaganda. In an attempt to study what is "really happening," without falsifying compartmentalization, Mark sets up two maps in his study, one marking all places where bombs and chemical warfare are manufactured and stored; the other, with a "medieval aspect," shows "War, Famine, Riots, Poverty, Prisons."[1] Neither map pays attention to political boundaries.

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[1]V, 285, 282, 283. At the end of The Golden Notebook, Anna Wulf starts pinning to her wall, in a haphazard way, various newspaper articles. A man comes along and takes them down, an indication that Anna will not crack up. Here in The Four-Gated City the technique of pinning up articles is disciplined and controlled, a development that indicates a more coherent and mature way of fighting compartmentalization and crack-up.

Martha, too, has gained victories. First, her energy returns. Second, Martha dreams that Dorothy will attempt suicide by cutting her wrists while wearing a black slip with a tear under the arm. And so Dorothy does. It is this new kind of ability, about which Dr. Lamb is, of course, highly skeptical, that is the new territory Martha has gained.

The whole house, too, in this section seems to be coming closer together. First, Paul is expelled from his progressive school for stealing so he comes home to stay. Then, on impulse, Martha suggests to Francis that he leave Eton where he is unhappy and come home and go to a day school. Francis also tries to gain an understanding of what happened to his father and to get a little closer to his mother whom he has not visited for years. The combination, however, of Francis trying to get closer, and Lynda trying to fight taking drugs proves too much for her, so she asks Dr. Lamb to commit her. Although her leaving the house seems to be a move away from a closer unity, Lynda's living without drugs is representative of the battle she has been silently fighting while Mark was working his way through various political stances and Martha was working on her feelings toward her mother. Further, at the end of the section, Lynda decides to return home and take an even more intimate part in the household, for she will be without Dorothy. Indeed, the times, both individually and collectively,

are looking up, but Dr. Lamb is the last to understand. Martha says:

> "Yes, but Dr. Lamb, supposing I insisted I had seen Dorothy's suicide exactly as it was, and I went on insisting, and you said no, I imagined it, and then I got angry and shouted at you, and went on shouting, and called you names, what would you call me then?"
> "But you aren't shouting," he said. "You are entirely rational."[1]

Martha, of course, knows enough to phrase the question in the conditional and does not press the point, but she could say, as Lynda did earlier in the novel with great defensiveness, "I know what I know."

Now that everyone is in the same house together, there follows a period of "muddle, confusion, general irritation,"[2] words used to describe a visit to Martha Patten's at the beginning of section two. Everyone is at cross purposes so Margaret and Mark quarrel; Mark and Graham Patten, Margaret's step-son, quarrel. The content of this quarrel is the formation of a committee on homosexuality, but the cause seems to be that whoever is quarrelling is so like the person he quarrels with that neither can see the other's motives. After the visit to Margaret's, dinner is prepared in the house on Radlett Street for Mark, Lynda, Francis, Paul, Phoebe, Jim Troyles (Phoebe's lover), Gwen and Jill (Arthur and Phoebe's children), Graham Patten, Patty Samuels, and African friends

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[1] V, 310.

[2] V, 312.

of Phoebe's. Martha, as the watcher, adjusts herself like a thermostat to the various moods of the people around her. While she is climbing the stairs to visit Paul and demand he do some homework before dinner, she thinks:

> When a small baby looked straight at you, for the first time, its eyes having thrown off its milk-glaze, you looked into eyes that would stay the same for as long as it lived. Then the eyes might belong to an infant in a screaming tantrum, a hoyden, an obedient child, a day-dreaming pubescent, someone moonstruck by love--the point was, there was no cheating, no going around, the small baby, and the rest. Oneself, or Paul, had to be, for as long as it was necessary, screaming baby, sulking adolescent, then middle-aged woman, whose eighteen hours a day were filled with a million details, fragments, reflected off the faceted mirror that was one's personality, that responded all the time every second, to these past selves, past voices, temporary visitors. And it was not so silly, not so absurd after all, to insist on the right to feel, while one played these ridiculous games, Do your homework, Remember Lynda's ill, Be kind to Paul; that all the time one communicated with something else, that person who looked steadily, always the same, from eyes only temporarily glazed over with anger, sorrow, or pain had been dealt out, then the reward was that in fact one did speak to the permanent person in Paul, or Francis, or anybody else.[1]

As Martha is becoming more and more aware of the "permanent person" inside herself whose function is "watching" and dealing with these "past selves, past voices, temporary visitors," in a way that indicates further growth on her part, so too, Mark is becoming more and more of a watcher of the political scene, with the situation becoming worse and worse. The conversation at the dinner table, for example, gets around to

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[1] V, pp. 349-350.

the Aldermaston March against the bomb. Mark had finally been persuaded to go, and he went, but not out of any conviction that marching would change the situation, only because he believed in "democracy" as he told one of the reporters who asked for a statement. Actually, his view was that when any cause "at all has become safe, let alone popular, then that's when it can be counted as lost."[1]

But what is not yet considered safe at all to discuss is the possibility of man developing new powers. The significant step Martha takes in this section is that the "watching" she does becomes more internalized. That is, she begins hearing Mark's thoughts. She is lying in bed one night and hears herself thinking that she would like to go to bed with Lynda. At first, she suspects she is a Lesbian and never knew it. Then, she realizes she is hearing Mark. Later, she hears Paul. Martha has more questions than answers about her new skill, but she seems to think that emotion is "the conductor of such impulses," much the way lightning is the conductor of rain, as we were told in the epigraph. She wishes she could walk into a shop and have the girl behind the counter reply: "Of course, you'll find the answer to what you are asking <u>there</u>. . . ."[2] Martha tells Lynda about her discovery and Lynda, of course, is not surprised at all. Together they try

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[1]V, 349.

[2]V, 354.

to learn more about what it is they are experiencing and Mrs. Lessing concludes the section with another "essential fact": "An essential fact was that if Lynda had not been mad, had not tested certain limits, then some of the things they discovered would have frightened them so badly they would not have been able to go on."[1]

In section three we are told that "the house continued, if not divided against itself, at least layered in atmospheres or climates." This description could fit Martha's personality at this time also, not divided but living in different layers and atmospheres. At the end of the section she will go to visit Jack and think that "the years since she had come here to make love, she had spent above all in the exercise of holding on to what is permanent in people--while moods, phases, stages flow past; what else is the business of bringing up children? She had had an education in recognizing a person's permanence."[2]

Martha deals with what is permanent in the children underneath the various stages they go through. Francis quits school and gets a job in the theatre; Paul brings his "female image" Zena home to live with him. Phoebe, terribly upset by the stormy adolescence her girls are going through (and apparently so involved in her own role as mother that she is

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[1]V, 357.

[2]V, 358, 382.

incapable of dealing with the permanent person inside her girls), has a breakdown and misses a chance to "open and absorb. She became, instead, more rigid, more controlled."[1]

Martha, on the other hand, finds dealing with the girls liberating. They come in and take her clothes "with the minimum of apology." Martha supplies them because she feels she ought to, then with a feeling of gratitude, because her own paraphernalia ceases to be her own. "It was as if a shell or a skin had been peeled off, as if an aspect of one's self had floated away and become part of that timeless and fluid creature, A Young Girl, whose features were as much little Gwen's or Jill's as they were hers."[2] She can no longer buy accessories without thinking she is buying them for a character in a play.

> The rejuvenation a young girl gives her mother or an older woman is a setting free into impersonality, a setting-free, also, from her personal past.
>
> Every time Martha wished she could slap Gwen or tell Jill that she was a monster--she remembered Martha Quest. That girl, shrill, violent, cruel, cold, using any weapon fair or foul to survive, as she had had to do, as everyone's first task was to do, had been stripped off her, had gone away, was simply a character worn for a day or two, a week or two, a year, half a dozen years, by Gwen or Jill or anybody else who needed it.[3]

The contrast between Phoebe and Martha is instructive. Phoebe breaks down, becoming more rigid and controlled. Martha, on the other hand, is "stripped," and consequently freed in the process.

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[1] V, 367, 376. [2] V, 369, 369. [3] V, pp. 369-370.

Now, Martha has another growing experience, although she does not know what to make of it. Lynda "gets silly" again and rather than go in a hospital, she lets Mark watch her. One night Mark creeps upstairs to Martha and says, "Sometimes it's as if . . . I don't know how to explain it . . . it's as if . . . not that she is mad, but there's madness. A kind of wavelength of madness--and she hooks into it and out, when she wants. I could hook into it just as easily. Or it could hook into me--it's in the air." After this conversation, Mark and Martha have sex, and when Mark takes hold "of Martha and links her into his high energy, she became charged with a feverish electricity--if that was the word for it." Filled with this electricity herself, Martha takes herself to Jack's, but their sex does nothing to alleviate the high-charged tension Martha feels. Since Martha has not been to Jack's in years, she notices and realizes that the Jack she once knew with his "physical intelligence," has gone away and the only thing left is a man with a need to break down morally the girls he sleeps with. One senses that the "old Jack" who "had simply died, or gone away,"[1] was the permanent Jack.

Section four devotes itself to the political, or collective, act of a huge Easter Week Peace March. The march, in

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[1] V, 380, 386, 386.

terms of its goal--the end of war and nuclear weapons--can not possibly be a success, but it is labeled one by the organizers, even though thousands of people marching will have little or no effect on war. One woman pushing a baby carriage has a placard upon which is written, "Caroline says no," but Mark, Martha, and Lynda, "are three midle-aged people with nothing in their experience of the world to help them to faith in the utility of Caroline's saying no. They . . . talked of the last war, which at no point had been within anybody's control, or indeed within anyone's imagination, before it happened." And since most of the people on the march are young people, they have all been influenced by the last war and did not grow up knowing the safety of the elm tree Thomas once spoke of. "These were people who had been stripped," we are told, and "one thing few believed that they had futures, in the sense that their grandparents would have defined a future. These were people who knew, before they were twenty, what their grandparents knew, perhaps, as they died." Living without the safety of the elm tree and illusions of the future, the young people freely discuss what sounds so negative to their parents: scientific inventions that will create mutants in the future, the effect of radioactive material in the air. In short, Mrs. Lessing concludes that a young girl who calls her father "bourgeois" because he is protesting such negative

talk, is "using the word correctly, meaning a person preferring safety, comfort, illusion, to the hazards and adventures of revolution. But in this case the revolution had gone inwards, was in the structure of life's substance."[1]

And the revolution is going on inside people, in the way they perceive reality, but most of Martha's and Mark's middle-aged friends do not see it. A contrast to the young who are learning so much about themselves and seeing the dangers of the political situation is Patty Samuels and Jack. Patty joins the group briefly on the march with her new lover and it is clear she is "bored with herself. The futility, the staleness, the harsh bright light of self-criticism that accompanies any stage of life where one is repeating outworn patterns of behaviour was aging her, staling her."[2] Patty, apparently, has not been able, like Martha, to develop the permanent person inside her.

Jack, on the other hand, whom Lynda and Martha meet on the way home, without that permanent person any longer, becomes "evil." There follows a long description of how Jack breaks down girls for the whore house. The process is not physical, but in common with armies, religious orders and psychoanalysis, "the common psychological factor in all these

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[1] V, 390, 394, 395, 395, 394, 394.

[2] V, 403.

is that a part or area of the person manipulated has to be made an accomplice of the person who manipulates."[1] Apparently the people who do not take the trouble to strip themselves down to their permanent person are the ones whose warring factions of masks and phases can create the conditions for degradation.

When Martha and Lynda leave Jack, they head for home. After dinner everyone gathers in the study, a room looking more like a "medieval tent or pavillion decorated or hung with tapestries that has a theme." Included now on the walls are space information, Dorothy's old diary with notations like "Must be careful next week; full moon. Always sets me off."[2] Throughout the room various colored markers key seemingly disparate facts with each other.

An important conversation follows, started by a young American radical who claims that British radicals equate political action with stating a problem. For example, the march of the afternoon just stated a problem: war. But the statement did not do anything to solve the problem. And Mark's study just states a problem, nothing more. Mark claims that this is only as far as he knows how to get. Lynda gets excited and in answer to the question of where ideas come from, says, "From the Bible to poetry to every edition of every newspaper

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[1] V, 471, 412.

[2] V, 413, 413.

or if it comes to that how one is oneself," but no one understands the last phrase. Then Lynda says that making a statement is more than just making a statement because thoughts are not self-contained. But no matter how one regards thought, self-contained or not, people still do not know how to control the results of their statements. The conversation breaks up with the arrival of Phoebe, and Mark ends the evening by putting a march leaflet on the wall and connecting it with the cost of the U.S. military expenditures for 1961, "a figure so enormous that it was meaningless to the ordinary mind, like distance expressed in light years."[1]

The third part of The Four-Gated City ends with a statement of a problem, but not a resolution. Jimmy Wood, a scientist science fiction writer and partner of Mark's in a manufacturing business, was also present for that conversation. Martha commented that Jimmy wrote books about mutants, but all he knew how to do was to state the case of the mutants. If Lynda is correct, however, even talking about them creates possibilities for making them come real. Or, "how one is oneself" will make a difference. Still, the section ends only with the statement of the problem.

The selected remarks that form the epigraph for part four bear directly on the question of how mutants evolve.

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[1]V, 421, 421.

The first comment is from a school's broadcast: "If you take a cell from the gut of a toad and transplant it into the toad's head, the gut cell has encoded in it all the information it needs to be a head cell." This remark indicates that there is a latent knowledge in a cell, which, if relocated and forced to take on a more sophisticated function, will adapt to this more highly specialized job. The analogue here seems to be that man confronted with a more sophisticated task of knowing could meet that challenge. And indeed, the last line of the second selection, taken from The Master Rumi of Balkh, says precisely that: "Because of a necessity, man acquires organs. So, necessitous one, increase your need. . . ." The necessitous ones of this age in the entire Children of Violence series are the ones so incapable of living an "ordinary life." They will be the ones whose need becomes so great that they will acquire organs. The final selection, taken from The Sufis again, discusses evolution:

> Sufis believe that, expressed in one way, humanity is evolving towards a certain destiny. We are all taking part in that evolution. Organs come into being as a result of a need for specific organs. The human being's organism is producing a new complex of organs in response to such a need. In this age of the transcending of time and space, the complex of organs is concerned with the transcending of time and space. What ordinary people regard as sporadic and occasional bursts of telepathic and prophetic power are seen by the Sufi as nothing less than the first stirrings of these same organs. The difference between all evolution up to date and the present need for evolution is that for the past ten thousand years or so we have

> been given the possibility of a conscious evolution. So essential is this more rarefied evolution that our future depends on it.[1]

It is this single statement in the five novels that most adequately expresses the theme of Mrs. Lessing's Children of Violence. The fact that our future depends upon our evolving indicates that the present political situation is indeed grave; that evolution occurs in response to a need indicates that the most needful will acquire these new organs; finally, that our physical transcendence of time and space creates the possibility within man to transcend time and space through telepathic and prophetic powers.

The need by which people who will evolve are driven is expressed early in part one. In her discussion of the younger generation, Mrs. Lessing says that they do not have traditional goals, like wanting to be a "soldier," or a "civil servant." Instead they are driven by precisely that "passion, or need which caused Lynda, or Martha, or Mark to ask: 'We've done that, have we?' As if there was a generation where not an occasional person, but dozens of people, very many indeed, worked with that process of being stripped, being sharpened and sensitised, which used the forms of ordinary life merely as tools, methods."[2] The question, "We've done that, have we?"

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[1] V, 424.

[2] V, 428, 428, 428.

reveals an awareness of the patterns that people get caught up in and live through and of the permanent person who lives beneath temporary roles, phases, moods. A person, apparently, is "stripped" down to his permanent self. Once he becomes his permanent self, he can then participate in the nascent evolutionary powers.

Society, of course, as a body, behaves in precisely the opposite way because "it is an organism which above all is unable to think, whose essential characteristic is the inability to diagnose its own condition."[1] Because Lynda is going through a growth period of sociability, preparatory to leaving Mark, the Radlett Street house goes through a period of heavy entertaining. This entertaining gives Mrs. Lessing an opportunity to detail the collective life and to examine what it means that society is unable to diagnose its own condition. For example, the guests at the parties--mostly political and artistic lions--see themselves as entirely different from one another; yet in reality they are very much the same. They also think that society is changing, but outside of their limited group, nothing is changing at all. Another inability of society to see itself clearly is the confusion created in the minds of the public between a t.v. actor who plays the lead in a series based on an old book of Mark's, The Way of a Tory

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[1] V, 430.

Hostess, and Mark himself. Because the actor fought in the Spanish Civil War, the public gets it firmly embedded in their mind that Mark himself fought in the Civil War. (Mark, incidentally, is always being misperceived by the public, in the same way that political realities of the political life are always misperceived.)

And Phoebe, so closely related to the collective life and an example of its inability to diagnose its condition, has more troubles. Her life is continually narrowing because she is not stripping herself. Jill, now finished with her adolescent need to fight her mother, would like to draw closer, but Phoebe can not seem to get out of the injured mother role. Nor, it seems, has she finished with her wifely role. The near break-up of Arthur's second marriage increases Phoebe's bitterness toward Arthur in particular and men and sex in general. Her two codes of "behaving well" and "when the Labour Party gets in" are both fatuous ways of dealing with both the personal and the collective side of life. Phoebe disastrously misconceives the solutions to Britain's problems in the closing statement of section one: "Just wait--when we get in, we'll change all this . . . when the people put us back in, then . . ."[1]

Section two shifts radically from the rather broad commentary of London collective life to a period of intense

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[1]V, 459.

individual growth for Martha. Lynda has "gone silly" again because of the strain of entertaining and the strain of trying to reconcile Phoebe and Jill, so she asks if Martha will stay with her this time, rather than Mark. Martha agrees, unaware of how important this experience will be for her.

First, the basement room is described. To a casual observer, it looks comfortable and pleasant until he studies it a little more closely. "For instance, around the walls there was a clear space or runway, as if there were a second invisible wall against which a table, chairs, bookcases, were arranged, a yard or so inside the visible wall. And again, all around the walls to the height of about five feet the paper had an irregularly smudged and rusty look, which turned out to be bloodstains from Lynda's bitten finger ends."[1]

When silly, Lynda moves around the walls as if looking for a way out. Martha tries being "reasonable" with Lynda and tells her she can get out if she wants, but this remark only increases Lynda's fury at pounding. When Martha goes to feed Lynda, Lynda overturns the tray and spills everything to the floor and then licks up milk from a half-broken saucer. Martha, beginning to feel along with Lynda rather than fight her with rationality, imitates her gesture, not knowing why.

Martha begins to feel energized, much the way Mark

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[1]V, 462.

felt when he was with Lynda, and Martha realizes that part of her wants to follow Lynda around the walls. She settles for exercizing. For days and nights, without proper food or sleep Martha stays with Lynda, but goes upstairs to bathe and change. When she encounters Mark, she feels so sensitive that his simple remark, "Are you all right?"[1] sparks a chain of reflections on what it is to be human.

Back with Lynda, Martha recalls a scene from her childhood where she was with adults who were "talking and smiling to each other with put-on false smiles and looks. For they did not mean what they said. They were afraid of each other, or at least had to placate each other . . . their wariness was so great that two of them could not meet without going stiffly on guard and stretching their mouths and making movements which said: I won't hurt you if you won't hurt me; look, I'm so nice and kind, don't hurt me."[2]

Martha begins crying over those wasted years and Lynda comments, "Yes, but how to get out, get out, get <u>out</u>. . . ."[3]

Soon, Martha "understood very well what it was Lynda was doing. When she pressed, assessed, gauged those walls, it was the walls of her own mind that she was exploring. She was asking: Why can't I get out? What is this thing that holds me in? Why is it so strong when I can imagine, and

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[1]V, 467. [2]V, 469. [3]V, 469.

indeed half remember, what is outside? Why is it that inside this room I am half asleep, doped, poisoned, and like a person in a nightmare screaming for help but no sounds come out of a straining throat?"[1]

Apparently, this "getting out" requires the kind of energy or force that Mark took to Martha and Martha took to Jack; aided, in Martha's case, by a period of not eating and not sleeping. But, since Lynda gave the force to Mark and now directly to Martha, something else must be needed, also. Martha, however, at this point is able to do what Lynda can do and that is get out into an "impersonal sea," or, perhaps, the human soul. Like the illumination of her early London days, Martha's head again becomes clear and receptive above a body filled with energy. This time Martha does not hear a song with a message for her, nor does she see pictures. This time she hears what Lynda is thinking: what her life would have been like if she had not been so "silly as to tell what I know."[2]

Behind Lynda's words, Martha hears a jumble of sounds, which, she realizes, are not coming from Lynda's mind or her own, but "the human mind, or part of it, and Lynda, Martha, can choose to plug in or not."[3]

Here, then, is an admission of an acceptance of a human mind into which individual minds can plug in. It is this

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[1]V, 469. [2]V, 473. [3]V, 473.

human mind, which is either in the process of being created, or else in the process of being reached (for maybe it has always been in existence), that becomes a "way out" of the confining individual mind and becomes a way of carrying on the inward revolution which--who knows?--might even make the world safe for human beings.

The description of this sea of sound, the human mind, is brilliant:

> It was as if a million radio sets ran simultaneously, and her mind plugged itself in fast to one after another, so that words, phrases, songs, sounds, came into audition and then faded. The jumble and confusion were worse when she allowed the current that pumped through her to get out of control, to rise and jerk and flood; the sea of sound became more manageable as she held herself quiet and contained. Yet even so, it was all she could do to hold on; Martha rode the current, a small boat on a fast river, or a tiny aircraft in a storm, her own body bucking and rolling under her; and words, shrieks, gunfire, explosions, sentences, came in, faded, or stayed. When something stayed then it, they, might develop or grow loud and accumulate around it other words, sounds, phrases, of the same kind or texture, like a bit of metal attracting to it particles of substances of a certain nature . . . until suddenly--while Martha understood (again) how the words, phrases, sounds, came in from that sound-length in an exact relation to some mood or impulse in herself (as faint and as fleeting as you like)--she realized that she was being taken over; she was taken over because she had allowed herself to become frightened. Her whole body, organism, vibrated, shook, was being shattered to bits, by the force with which the sea of sound entered her. Her head was a jar, a bedlam; but, as she was about to cry out, scream, let go of control, perhaps bang her rioting head against the walls, she looked at Lynda sitting quiet on her part of the carpet, and remembered that some days before, during Lynda's long progress around and around the walls, she had remarked: "I must get through the sound barrier. Here is the sound barrier. I must get

> through it." As Martha remembered Lynda saying this, Lynda said, "You can, but it's difficult. If you let it take over, then it is hard to make it go away again. Be careful." These words threw Martha first into a panic; then, as she flung herself down on the floor beside Lynda, thinking that it was not possible to "get through" and that she was doomed forever to be shattered by sounds as powerful as pneumatic drills at work inside her brain, her whole person (apparently on the point of explosion and shaking and trembling) resisted the invasion, clenched itself in self-defense and held, contained, gripped tight, calmed. Martha dropped off to sleep suddenly, totally, but probably not for more than a few moments, the space of some heartbeats. When she woke, or came to, her body rested and her mind back at that point where it was soft and clear and listening, with the ocean of sound a low retreating booming noise safely far away.[1]

Martha then watches a scene in her mind out of Lynda's past, her encounter with an Indian in a Lyons tea room. While the two women talk together, Lynda suggests that men make machines to do what man can do by himself. He can be a radio or a television or a space probe. Martha drops off to sleep and when she awakes, goes for a walk. Her vision is so clear that the sight of her fellow human beings deeply pains her, for they all seem so asleep, so unaware of themselves, or their fellow men or what is going on around them. They are distracted by petty thoughts like a fight with the landlord. What is most frightening is "that they walked and moved and went about their lives in a condition of sleepwalking."[2]

Martha, in this mood, has clearly fulfilled the desire she expressed to Jack so long ago of not wanting to live like

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[1] V, 474.

[2] V, 481.

a "hypnotized animal." After Martha gets back from her walk, she realizes that these experiences of hers are her new growing point which "was never, could never be just Martha's, could not be only the property or territory of one individual."[1]

She wants to find answers to her questions about her experiences but does not know where to look, so, in a narrational time leap, she visits Jimmy Wood at the factory and collects a potpourri of books he uses for his science fiction plots. They are "everything rejected by official culture and scholarship": Rosicrucianism, alchemy, Buddhism, Christian mystics, witchcraft. After reading these books, she concludes that, although the language and set of beliefs are different in all of them, they all express the same processes and psychological truths. She also concludes that nothing in her education ever told her about any of this, so that fear forced her to fight hard in order to read these books objectively. And the same official culture that rejects these science fictional sources also created the blindness in our culture that made Lynda ill, for a central fact about her is "that she need never have been ill at all."[2]

But during this particular "silly-spell" Lynda goes through a terrible bout with her self-hater, finally pulls out

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[1] V, 486.

[2] V, 496.

of it, and then she and Martha are ready to confront the outside world again.

They clean up and visit the hairdressers; then they study the new additions to the maps in Mark's study. Just as Martha has taken a huge leap forward in her individual growth, so Mark has taken a step forward in his study of the collective. His facts now force him to a conclusion:

> "It is now clear that in the next decade or two it will be a question of the human race's survival--but survival from certain hazards not at the moment envisaged, since the coming catastrophe is as little foreseen in the form which it will actually take as the previous wars. We can assume that governments will react as in the past; and that it will be the responsibility of individuals to forecast, plan, make provision for . . ."[1]

But this is as far as Mark in dealing with the collective can get. Both he and Martha have more to learn.

In section three, both Mark and Martha will reach more conclusions: Mark on the collective side and Martha on the individual side. Mark, for instance, discovers that his partner Jimmy Wood has been making experimental machines that damage part of the human brain. Mark is terribly shocked that he has unknowingly been a partner in this despicable business and drops the partnership. Martha's discovery about her mind and the way to "get out" pushes her to the next step: she decides she must experiment with her mind. To this end,

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[1] V, 500.

among her contemporaries, "there was no single person or group of people to whom she could say: Give me privacy to explore my own being: promise not to summon doctors and psychiatrists, policemen."[1] But to young Paul, now a rich man, she could turn for a room in one of his houses.

Martha spends close to three months by herself experimenting. First, she does not eat or sleep, remembering this state to be a precondition to any of the previous high states she arrived at before. Then she figured she would go through the sea of sound again.

As she enters the ocean of sound, or the human mind, a voice detaches itself from the rest--the voice of the self-hater. She lives with this self-hater for two weeks until the most ordinary of considerations saves her. She realizes she is wasting time, so the self-hater subsides, but she has learned that this self-hater is what defeated Lynda. Then she goes through a period of learning about aspects of her own personality: "sadism, masochism, the pleasure of hurting."[2] She dreams, for example, of a concentration camp and watches "the ragged bit of refuse (me) pushed into the gas chamber and the uniformed woman (me) who is pushed." Then she gets tuned into something like "a hate programme arranged for the

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[1] V, 501.

[2] V, 510.

pleasure of some international lunatic."[1] She becomes an anti-Semite, and successively a member of all hate groups: white for black, Germans for Jews, a hater of Arabs, of English.

A visitor comes and interrupts the international hater. When the visitor leaves, Martha enters Bosch country, then Dali country. Later, she starts writing nonsense rhymes and realizes that all the qualities she has listed in these rhymes, many of them contraries, are all the qualities she has in her own personality.

Martha is interrupted again, this time by Paul who invites her to a Coldridge family dinner to discuss what steps can be taken about the house on Radlett Street, since the government wants to requisition it for administrative purposes. Nothing is decided at the dinner and Martha returns.

Here she succumbs to the Devil again and "it was at that stage that Martha was conducted through the Stations of the Cross by the Devil." Although she has never known anyone well who has gone through this experience,

> it was as if she knew it, knew its meaning. From the moment when Pontius Pilate washed his hands to the time when she, Martha, who was also the Devil, prepared to be bound on the Cross, because of the frightfulness of her crimes, she was as it were whipped through the ritual by the hating scourging tongue of the Devil who was herself, her hating, self-hating self.[2]

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[1] V, 511.

[2] V, 521, 522.

When Martha finally gives up the flat, the Devil still accompanies her, but after trying to rid Lynda of her Devil and a spell of being busy with the children, the Devil retreats. Soon he becomes a "silly little nagging voice,"[1] and disappears into the sea of sound--just one voice among many. "And soon, the thing was all over--finished. Her mind was her own."[2]

When Martha finishes her experience, she writes down her conclusions: (1) The experience is not dangerous, but inefficient. (2) If anyone, like a dictator, wishes to control a party, all he has to do is embody the self-hater. (3) Martha Quest has experienced her mirror image; but she is not the mirror, nor is she its surface: she is the watcher. (4) If at any time she had gone to a psychiatrist, she would have been pushed over the edge.[3]

These four conclusions that Martha reaches on the individual side parallel what immediately follows. Martha returns home and finds that Mark has been able to take a further step: he, too, has reached some conclusion about the collective situation. He has been able to go beyond merely recording facts and trying to see their interrelationships. His conclusions are: (1) Everyone is hypnotized by the idea of

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[1] V, 527.

[2] V, 527 (Italics: mine).

[3] V, 523-534.

Armageddon, the coming destruction of the world, or large parts of it. (2) This spell makes it impossible to prepare for what will likely happen. (3) "What will happen is a development of what is already happening and what has been accelerating, out of control, since 1914 and the green light for mass extermination." (4) Out of ignorance and fear, the government will not tell the people what is really happening. His fifth conclusion is left blank. It starts: "Therefore groups of people aware of this situation should set themselves to . . ."[1]

That these two sets of conclusions should appear simultaneously, and in the same numbered form, indicate again the interrelationship between the life of the individual and the collective.

The section ends with the arrival of the Maynards, Martha's old enemies, who are visiting England and who give Martha 800 pounds for Rita, Binkie Maynard's and Maisie Gale's daughter, soon to arrive in London. It is not at all surprising that the Maynards should show up at the point in the novel where Martha's mind is her own. She is now capable of meeting with fondness her old enemies: Mr. Maynard with his cynicism and Mrs. Maynard who "had shown her [Martha] power at its ugliest."[2]

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[1] V, 525.

[2] V, 528.

With all past personal scores settled, Martha now looks to the future in section four. The house, now no longer needed as a symbol of Martha's various selves, must be vacated, and Martha realizes that "the holding operation" is now over. What we discover is that Francis and Jill, Jill's children and the people living with them, are now in the house, and so is Rita Maynard, soon to marry Mark Coldridge, whom Lynda finally grew strong enough to leave. Margaret has called a party as a sort of farewell and everyone is getting ready to go--even if reluctantly. Martha's last job is some bookkeeping on a new project, the city that Mark and a wealthy American industrialist are going to build in the Tunisian desert. For Mark went further with his conclusions and decided that private individuals should prepare themselves to vacate heavily populated areas of the world, like London, which will soon become uninhabitable. The party turns out to be a large one and the guests Margaret gathers together predict the future: a new fascism dominated by Royalty, the Church, and business with England subtly taking orders from America. When everyone leaves, Martha is alone walking along the river and wondering where she should look next for new growth. The novel ends:

> She walked, quiet, while the house began to reverberate: a band had started up. She walked beside the river while the music thudded, feeling herself as a heavy impervious lump that, like a planet doomed always to be dark on one side, had vision in front only, a myopic

> searchlight blind except for the tiny three-dimensional path open immediately before her eyes in which the outline of a tree, a rose, emerged, then submerged in dark. She thought, with the dove's voices of her solitude: Where? But where. How? Who? No, but where, where. . . . Then silence and the birth of a repetition: Where? Here. Here?
>
> Here, where else, you fool, you poor fool, where else has it been, ever. . . .[1]

The Appendix opens with an actual new item that appeared in The Observer, August 11, 1968, entitled "R.A.F. Man 'Victim of Porton Nerve Gas'" and tells of Mr. William Cockayne who has had nervous breakdowns because of his exposure to an experimental gas being developed at Porton Down.

The remaining ten documents that compose the Appendix were in the hands of Amanda Coldridge, Francis's stepdaughter. They were written between the years 1995 and 2000 and were destroyed by her before the Northern National Area (formerly North China) was overrun by the Mongolian National Area.

The first document is an appeal from the Mongolian Government for memoirs of events leading to the catastrophe, but we later discover that the government really wants information about the exceptional people within their society so they can be destroyed or rendered harmless.

The second doument is a long letter from Francis to Amanda. He gives her his memories of the time before the great catastrophe. He, Jill, Jill's children, and a number of

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[1] V, 559.

their friends, after the Radlett Street house was closed, moved into the country, simply because they thought living there would be easier. They lived without program or creed, but quite happily, until Graham Patten put them on his television show. Then the community started quarrelling among themselves. Meanwhile, society, under a fascistic banner urging self-sacrifice and work to get the nation on its feet economically again, raged like a drunkard, laughing at the government and going on senseless riots, while many individual citizens would periodically crack up. The first sign that something was seriously wrong was that "nothing worked." (Nothing working should remind the reader of Dorothy's predictive neurosis and the ensuing Herculean battles with gas men, the phone company, the manufacturers of the new stove.) Then, senseless violence increased to the point where anything would inflame a gang of young boys. Police protection had to be bought; private protective agencies fought with other rival protective agencies.

Jill, too, cracked up one day and just walked out on Francis and the children and started living with the man next door. Francis was upset and almost cracked up himself.

Around this time, Francis went to visit his mother and Martha. They told him of the people with telepathic powers and of their attempts to work quietly without letting the government know about them, for any government would be hostile

to a body of people who could destroy their secrets. Francis, at first, was disbelieving, but finally came to realize that the women were right. They warned him of the impending disaster. As he writes this letter to Amanda, he is apparently one of the new "seerers" or "hearers" in contact with others throughout all territories on the earth. They are the ones, who, much like the readers in Bradbury's Farenheit 451, will commit to memory the real events preceding the great catastrophe.

Francis has no further need to tell Amanda what happened immediately before the catastrophe because she was there. The chronological narration picks up with a letter from Martha who tells what has happened to her and her group since she was separated from Francis, immediately before the catastrophe. The "seers" and "hearers" had been predicting the catastrophe that Lynda first dreamed about in the form of poison dew and tried to urge people to leave England, but to no avail. Some people, however, were saved: those who trusted the informers, random children around the docks at the end, and people who showed up and went with them because it "felt" like the thing to do. Martha, along with a hundred others, went in a pleasure boat and ended up off the coast of Scotland on a deserted island where the survivors stayed for some fifteen years. They were not especially desirous of being rescued because they were self-sufficient enough where they were. Martha spends some

time telling Francis of the children born on this island who can "see" and "hear" and other children whose powers they are not certain about. The air, she says, is "high," and that in quality of their lives there is a "transparency, a crystalline gleam. It is the children who have it, who are sensitive to it--being with them means we have to be quick and sensitive ourselves, as far as we can be. . . ."[1] There is one special child Martha is particularly fond of. In the letter she predicts her death; she will die the following winter, one which would be especially cold.

Martha concludes her life, not in the four-gated city, that part of her adolescent dream for the betterment of all mankind and the fantasy that Mark wove into the novel that landed him in the Rescue business. But, she finishes her life in a "high" air, like the one that she felt when she had her intimation walking the London streets, and on an island, which may be the one she dreamed of so many years ago in between husbands. She is not bitter or anguished, but rather knows where to look for what she is seeking--not in a collective dream, but within an individual reality which was always there but discovered so late in life and so painfully. Her life, her quest, ending as it does with an entelechical wholeness, has been a success, in spite of the disasters which unforeseeably

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[1] V, 606.

so wracked the world from the beginning of World War I to the time she dies. And presumably, this world will continue to be wracked, for the same blind bureaucrats are in control once again, as always.

The next letter is short and we learn that Martha Hesse is dead, but that she has requested that one Joseph Batts be sent to Mark Coldridge.

The following document is some notes found among Mark Coldridge's papers after his death. First, he complains that his dream for a city got twisted into one huge Rescue Plan which did not even end up saving as many people as he expected because Asian flu killed so many people, including the children he had with Rita. His heart then goes out to a lost England, even though he knows that "loving a country is like loving a person, its all moonshine and anguish." He is now alone and has no one, not Martha or his beloved Lynda, to talk to. "Nothing has been done right, and I don't know who I can tell it to."[1] He is in despair for the future and sounds dry and critical when he responds to Francis's statement that there is hope for the world. He never understood in Martha, Lynda, and Francis "that nasty mixture of irony and St. John of the Cross and the Arabian Nights they all . . . went in for." What remains real for him is what has always been real: "Lynda,

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[1]V, 610, 610, 621-613, 613, 613, 613.

and then Lynda, and then Lynda. Lynda and England." One day he saw a young Yemeni Arab whose smile reminded him of Lynda, and he writes: "Thirty years of living with Rita, whom I was never sorry I married, all that could not mean to me what that boy's smile meant that night when he squatted down by the mud wall--because of Lynda, who is dead." He concludes: "I write every night when the camp is quiet and Rita has gone to bed, but I don't know why or who to. Lynda, I suppose, or Martha."

The novel reaches a tremendous emotional climax with Mark's words "Lynda and England," and compressed into that simple statement is the anguish, the bitterness, the incomprehensibility of a wasted life. Mark has never really found out that the real answer for him is where it is for everyone, "Here, you poor fool, where else has it been, ever," inside himself. In his search for a political solution to the problems of the world, in his desperate attempt to make a reality out of the four-gated utopian dream, Mark never looked where he should have for its foundation--inside himself. For Martha, Lynda, and Francis who did discover this secret, he had nothing but annoyance and a sense of bother at their silliness. He squandered his pearl of great price for schemes which proved in the end not worth a damn.

In other words, there is no four-gated city. There is

no political solution out of the dangerous situation the world finds itself in. There are only individual solutions. At least, such was the case for Martha Quest, about whom one can say paraphrasing the opening of Dickens' David Copperfield that she did indeed turn out to be the heroine of her own life, and no one else could ever have been. The permanent Martha won out in the end. Poor Mark.

The final document is permission for Joseph Batts to travel with Mark Coldridge, "in order for him to attend courses in gardening. I take it," the official writes in his bureaucratic blindness to Joseph's powers, "that your statement that he is ten years old is a misprint?"[1]

In his article, "Writing American Fiction," Philip Roth comes up with an observation that can supply us with some understanding of the tone of the ending of the novel. Roth points out the fantastic character of American culture, so fantastic in its degeneracy that writers can hardly find a subject, except, quite often, themselves. But, he asks, "If the world is as crooked and unreal as I think it is becoming, day by day; if one feels less and less power in the face of this unreality, day by day; if the inevitable end is destruction, if not of all life, then of much that is valuable and civilized in life--then why in God's name is the writer pleased?"

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[1] V, 614.

He mentions specifically Herbert Gold's The Optimist, Saul Bellow's Henderson the Rain King, and Curtis Harnack's The World of Ancient Hands--all novels which end with the hero, not just affirming life, but celebrating it. Given the fact of our society today, however, Mr. Roth prefers the ending of Ralph Ellison's The Invisible Man: "For here too the hero is left with the simple stark fact of himself. He is as alone as a man can be. Not that he hasn't gone out into the world; he has gone out into it, and out into it, and out into it--but at the end he chooses to go underground, to live there and to wait. And it does not seem to him a cause for celebration either."[1]

Mrs. Lessing's Children of Violence ends on somewhat the same note. Martha Quest has gone out into the world and out into it, only to find that there is no political solution to the increasingly dangerous world, but rather settles for a private answer, shared by others who may, one day, create a better world. Still, the present reality is far too gloomy to sponsor a celebration. Consequently, it is Mark's sense of anguish and unhappiness which ends the novel, rather than the quiet satisfaction achieved by Martha after a lifetime of struggle.

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[1]Commentary, XXXI (March, 1961), 223-233.

CHAPTER III

THEMATIC IMPLICATIONS OF CHARACTER

It is impossible to discuss Martha Quest as heroine of the Children of Violence series without relating her directly to the theme of the series--the individual in his relation to the collective--for the derivation of her personality stems in large part from the historical peculiarity of the age in which she lived. As Georg Lukacs, a Marxist critic, says about Scott's heroes: "Certain crises in the personal destinies of a number of human beings coincide and interweave within the determining context of an historical crisis."[1] Although throughout Children of Violence, no shot is fired nor is any major character imprisoned, it is the atmosphere of changing events that emanates from the events themselves that influence Martha's life so profoundly. She marries for the first time, as she tells Mr. Maynard, "because there is going to be a war."[2] She marries for the second time because her Communist enemy alien lover needs political protection. And she loses

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[1] The Historical Novel, intro. by Irving Howe (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), p. 41.

[2] II, 319.

her lover through blackwater fever as a direct result of the tragedy of the concentration camp horror of World War II. Then through Mark Coldridge, Martha experiences the repression of the Cold War.

But within the character of Martha Quest there is a force of resistance which transcends these societal forces. This force is a part of her even before the novel opens. Partly a gift from the majestic silences of the veld and partly a conscience formed by her reading of the romantic poets, it creates within Martha an inability to settle, finally, for a hypnotized or false emotional life.

This refusal to accept a status quo less perfect than her dream of an ideal city, springing from that part in her called the watchful observer or conscience, ultimately overpowers her compulsive relationship with her mother and societal pressures from capitalism and socialism alike.

Martha Quest as heroine is best characterized by Georg Lukacs' idea of a hero:

> A "typical" hero to Lukacs is not a hero like others but one who concentrates in himself all the forces of change at a particular time; as a character he brings certain influences to a point of action and becomes himself a determining influence. . . . These heroes make themselves forces equal to the force of society they resist and seek to transform. For Lukacs, the hero of a literary work must in some sense be equal to the achievement of a new society; the individual, though in his social character "determined" by society, must as an individual

have the conscious view and larger vision that lead to a new society.[1]

Martha Quest is no mere caricature or embodied idea. Irving Howe in Politics and the Novel says: "At its best, the political novel generates such intense heat that the ideas it appropriates are melted into its movement and fused with the emotions of its characters."[2] The reader confronts a genuine, rebellious adolescent when Martha impetuously rips her clothes apart as prelude to redesigning them. It is this same rebellious young woman, who, at her wedding to Douglas Knowell turns angrily to her mother and hisses, "Who's getting married, me or you?"[3] And this rebel turned Communist is still Martha when she and Jasmine look out of a window at a hungry kaffir: "Martha and Jasmine smiled at each other, saying in the smile that because of them, because of their vision, he was protected and saved, the future they dreamed of seemed just around the corner; they could almost touch it."[4] A more mature Martha falls in love with Thomas Stern and suffers through the intensity of that relationship. It teaches her to grow through suffering about which she can do nothing.

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[1]Studies in European Realism, intro. by Alfred Kazin (New York: Grosset & Dunlop, 1964), pp. x-xi.

[2]Politics and the Novel (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), p. 21.

[3]I, 256.

[4]II, 37.

But the Martha Quest of The Four-Gated City needs further discussion. In his review of The Four-Gated City, Frederick P. W. McDowell has remarked that Martha merely becomes a passive spectator.[1] Earlier in the novels, she had been more active, but now she only watches. And Joyce Carol Oates sees Martha as a "point of view, a consciousness, rather than a dramatic character."[2]

Mrs. Lessing herself says of The Four-Gated City: "The form of the book has been shot to hell. The first version was too long, and the second time I wrote it the form changed. I've had Children of Violence set up for twenty years. By the time I wrote the last volume I'd put myself into a damned cage, but it's probably better now that I've heaved the rules out."[3]

What shifts the form of The Four-Gated City most radically is the extended use of character, for almost all of the major characters in this novel become fragments of Martha's personality, especially those who live in the Coldridge house.

About the household forming a whole, Mrs. Lessing is quite specific. After Colin defects to the Soviet Union,

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[1]"Recent British Fiction: Some Established Writers," Contemporary Literature, II, no. 3 (Summer, 1970), 424.

[2]"Last Children of Violence," a review of The Four-Gated City in Saturday Review, May 17, 1969, p.

[3]Raskin, op.cit., p. 170.

Sally-Sarah commits suicide, and Lynda and Dorothy move into the basement, Martha's life appears becalmed, for "the house was running, the children's lives organized, Mark's affairs attended to." Since she did not know what she should be doing, "She watched. . . . When Mark, or Lynda, or even Mrs. Mellendip looked at her, did they see a woman who watched and waited--passive?"[1]

Martha's thoughts gradually turn to death, yet one afternoon she thinks that a few weeks ago Lynda in the basement had thoughts of death which now

> had moved up to Martha's room on the second floor.
>
> It seemed as if her capacity to think this, see this, had the power to shift the fog in the room, start a fresh current.
>
> She was able to move outside the listless woman who sat hour after hour looking through a window.
>
> She had a glimpse into a view of life where the house and people in it could be seen as a whole, making a whole. It was not a glimpse or insight which could be easily brought down into an ordinary air: it came late at night, and afterwards Martha remembered that the phrase "Having something in common" had had, for the time the condition lasted, a real meaning. They, in this house, had something in common, made up something. . . .
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> Mark and the comrades, all furious energy and defence; Lynda and her Dorothy in the twilight of their basement; Martha, all passivity; the two sad children, who were the pasts and the future of the adult people: but an onlooker, someone looking into this house as if it were a box whose lid could be taken off, would be struck by a curious fact. Martha, defeated by the house, by the currents of personality in it, was the one person in it who had no reason at all to be suffering, to be weighed down: yet she was the only person who (at that time, during that particular

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[1]V, 190, 190.

> spring) was weighed down, was suffering, who thought of death.
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> Martha was suddenly, not easily, but after effort, able to look down into the house, achieve that viewpoint. As she did so, the heavy atmosphere of death in her room cleared, thinned, and went.[1]

What is happening is that Martha, while retaining her identity of the first four novels, now also becomes symbolic of only part of herself--the permanent part of herself, the detached observer, her consciousness, the Martha who watches. As William York Tyndall defines the symbol, it is "an analogy for something unstated, consists of an articulation of verbal elements that, going beyond reference and the limits of discourse, embodies and offers a complex of feeling and thought. Not necessarily an image, this analogical embodiment may also be a rhythm, a juxtaposition, an action, a proposition, a structure, or a poem. One half of this peculiar analogy embodies the other, and the symbol is what it symbolizes."[2]

We may add to this definition that a character may act as a symbol also. Hermann Hesse springs to mind here for his use of character as symbol in almost all of his works, Demian, Narcissus and Goldmund, and Steppenwolf to be specific. Martha's personality now expands to include, in some way,

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[1]V, 191-192.

[2]The Literary Symbol (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), pp. 12-13.

almost all of the characters in The Four-Gated City, or else the characters remind her of someone in her past. This use of character has a fundamental thematic importance, for if the purpose of life is to transcend one's inherent compunction toward compartmentalization, then the solution is to realize that mankind, as a whole, makes up a single entity. The novelistic expression of Martha's growth is her recognition that, for example, the people in the house have something in common, a banal expression whose depth of meaning beneath the surface of easy comprehensibility offers possibilities as a solution to man's present anomic existence. Only failure of imagination restrains man from this vision, and such a failure on the collective level leads to the horrorific activities of war, racism, and cruelty to the insane.

But if the Martha Quest of the first four novels is to become what she is capable of being, then she must integrate into this Martha who watches the other parts of herself. "Now, she found herself in the grip of violent distaste for the preoccupations of the basement; and disgust for Mark and his politics."[1]

Martha's distaste stems from her still imperfect perception of herself. Martha must reconcile herself to Mark by reconciling herself to that younger version of herself represented

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[1]V, 193.

by Mark's lover, Patty Samuels. After that reconciliation, she is able to go further. She is now able to confront her blocked-up emotions that center around her mother, but during this time,

> The basement flat, its occupants, were isolating themselves in her mind, as if it was a territory full of alien people from whom she had to protect herself, with whom she could have no connection. What was happening in fact was exactly the same process as when some months ago she watched "Communism," meaning Patty, Mark and their friends, becoming separated from herself, becoming alien so that for two pins she could have become a hater. For two pins now she could switch into an enemy of the shadow world of the basement. She could watch the mechanisms at work in her mind, see how Rose Mellendip became surrounded by a light first ridiculous, then menacing. She became something to be destroyed, like a witch in the Middle Ages. Sweep it under the carpet! Sweep it out of sight![1]

The novel is replete with remarks justifying this interpretation of the extended use of character in the novel. For example, when Martha first meets Lynda, Martha is afraid of her because she "came too close to Martha." But near the end of the novel when Martha watches Lynda during her silly spell, Martha wants to leave, but, "how could Martha go out, since she was part of Lynda?"[2]

About Mark during his Communist phase, Martha thinks of him as her "young self," but after he completes that phase, Patty Samuels (also Martha's young self) tells Martha "You're Mark's female equivalent." Francis "the clown" reminds Martha

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[1] V, 211.

[2] V, 109, 466.

of her "Matty." Jill and Gwen are a young Martha Quest fighting Phoebe, Martha's mother. Margaret Patten is "everyone's difficult mother."[1]

And on the stairs to Paul's room, Martha stands "feeling herself (or rather, the surface of herself) to be a mass of fragments, or facets, or bits of mirror reflecting qualities embodied in other people. . . . This was the condition of being a middle-aged person, a deputy in the centre of a house, the person who runs things, keeps things going, conducts a holding operation."[2] It is the surface Martha whose fragments of herself are symbolized by the other characters in the novel, but Martha remains entirely herself and symbolically only the permanent Martha.

But even the Martha who is conducting the holding operation is not completely passive. Rather, her center of growth and interest shifts from the outside world to her mind. She actively pursues her quest of knowing her mind, and through this pursuit becomes who she is capable of being by contacting the human mind, expanding her sensitivity beyond the cage of her own ego, and growing in sympathy to the point where she can see parts of herself in everyone.

Before we discuss more fully Martha's journey into her

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[1] V, 178, 403, 179, 137. [2] V, 336.

own mind, we can profitably compare the Martha Quest of the first four volumes with George Eliot's Maggie Tulliver, for Dorothy Brewster points out that Martha Quest is a "Rhodesian white colonial Maggie Tulliver."[1]

George Eliot's bildungsroman, The Mill on the Floss, diverts its total concentration on Maggie Tulliver into a contrapuntal, but less significant, interest in the life of Maggie's brother Tom for the structural purpose of contrast and tension. Tom's life and his reactions to situations in which he finds himself are an indirect way of underlining how differently men and women were treated in the post-Napoleonic society in which the Tulliver children grew up. Mr. Tulliver naturally decides to educate his son, even though his daughter shows a much greater aptitude for classical studies and mathematics. No one in the novel challenges his decision, nor does George Eliot intrude with narrational condemnation. Although Maggie would like to learn, she does not question her father's judgment either, but senselessly and, finally, self-destructively rails against her destiny. When Maggie is twelve, she visits Tom at the home of his tutor Mr. Stelling, and Maggie decides to ask that man if she can learn Euclid.

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[1]Doris Lessing (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1965), p. 159.

> "Mr. Stelling," she said, that same evening when they were all in the drawing-room, "couldn't I do Euclid, and all Tom's lessons, if you were to teach me instead of him?"
>
> "No; you couldn't," said Tom, indignantly. "Girls can't do Euclid: can they, sir?"
>
> "They can pick up a little of everything, I daresay," said Mr. Stelling. "They've a great deal of superficial cleverness; but they couldn't go far into anything. They're quick and shallow."
>
> Tom, delighted with this verdict, telegraphed his triumph by wagging his head at Maggie behind Mr. Stelling's chair. As for Maggie, she had hardly ever been so mortified. She had been so proud to be called "quick" all her little life, and it now appeared that this quickness was the brand of inferiority. It would have been better to be slow, like Tom.
>
> "Ha, ha! Miss Maggie!" said Tom, when they were alone, "you see it's not such a fine thing to be quick. You'll never go far in anything, you know."
>
> And Maggie was so oppressed by this dreadful destiny that she had no spirit for a retort.[1]

The point to be made here is that Maggie is very willing to believe what Mr. Stelling has to say about her own abilities. She is in complete agreement with him that she is "quick and shallow." The oppression of her dreadful destiny pursues her after her father goes bankrupt, for she does not think she can do anything about the situation but stand and wait, and, of course, promise Tom never to see Philip Wakem, son of the family's enemy, without Tom's consent. It never occurs to her that she has as much right to do as she pleases as Tom. After her father's death, Maggie chooses to be an "independent" rather than let Tom support her, but this independence takes

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[1](New York: The Pocket Library, 1956), pp. 159-160.

the form of servitude as schoolmistress in a third-rate boarding school. After all, what was she trained for?

Martha Quest, on the other hand, is very sensitive to unfair treatment and is capable of recognizing it at least, even though she can not change it. Even as a girl of fifteen she asks her friends Selly and Joss Cohen to get her books on women's rights. Later, when she is in town and bored with the Sports Club life, she looks around for another job.

She first goes to a large department store with the idea of becoming a window dresser.

> Mr. Baker, far from being discouraged, seemed to approve; and it was not until the unpleasant subject of money was approached that Martha realized she was being engaged for the sum of five pounds a month, which, Mr. Baker, blandly assured her, was the salary all his girls were first employed at. Martha asked naively how it was possible to live on it. The gentleman replied that his work girls lived at home, or, if this were not possible, he arranged for them to live in a certain well-known hostel. Now, Martha knew this hostel was run on charity, and that Mr. Baker was a town councillor, a very influential person. She was young enough to be surprised and shocked that he should get his labour cheap by such methods. Mr. Baker, who had imagined that he was on the point of getting a young and attractive girl "of a good type" (this was his particular euphemism for the uncomfortable word "middle-class") for five pounds a month, was astounded to find this same apparently mild and amenable person suddenly half inarticulate with fury, informing him in short and angry jerks that he ought to be ashamed of himself. Mr. Baker at once grasped the situation, said to himself that this spirit could be useful if properly handled, and, in the suave and reasonable voice of an experienced handler of labour, began handling her. His salesgirls were contented and happy--why, they stayed with him for years.[1]

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[1] I, 219-220.

Martha's second attempt to find a job is as a reporter on the Zambesia News.

> Mr. Spur said that since her shorthand was now passable, and her typing fast, if inaccurate, she could certainly have a job with the women's page. . . .
> "The woman's page!" said Martha indignantly.[1]

Presented here, then, is a contrast of awareness on a social level between Maggie and Martha. The former accepts the socio-economic dictates of society without indignation, but little insight. Martha, however, is far more aware of the inequities of society and can turn her anger toward Mr. Baker and Mr. Spur, respectively, rather than internalize her feelings of anger into a self-despite and sense of unworthiness. The times have changed, but this passage of time alone is not enough to keep provincial Martha from falling into the same trap as provincial Maggie. It is Martha's own awareness of the collective life that spares her the "interior colonialization" of the patriarchy that Maggie Tulliver succumbs to without a second thought.

But the difference in levels of awareness goes on in far more important areas: in the understanding of the nature of love. Maggie seems to think she is in love with Philip, but this love is tinged with maternal and sacrificial qualities. When Philip asks Maggie if she could love him better than her

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[1] I, 220.

brother Tom--this is while they are all children--Maggie replies, "I don't think I could love you better than Tom. But I should be so sorry--so sorry for you."[1] This pity is for Tom's deformed state. Then when Maggie is nineteen and considering marrying Philip because of her frightening feelings of aroused sexuality for Stephen Guest, she considers breaking with her brother over Philip.

> For Philip, who a little while ago was associated continually in Maggie's mind with the sense that Tom might reproach her with some justice, had now, in this short space, become a sort of outward conscience to her, that she might fly to for rescue and strength. Her tranquil, tender affection for Philip, with its root deep down in her childhood and its memories of long quiet talk confirming by distinct successive impressions the first instinctive bias--the fact that in him the appeal was more strongly to her pity and womanly devotedness than to her vanity or other egoistic excitability of her nature, seemed now to make a sort of sacred place, a sanctuary where she could find refuge from an alluring influence which the best part of herself must resist, which must bring horrible tumult within, wretchedness without.[2]

This kind of pity and maternal feeling keeps Martha's first marriage alive for as long as it does remain alive. After she and Douglas fight, Martha can not understand why he is complaining because she is behaving the way she really is, "for at this moment she forgot the years of feminine compliance, of charm, of conformity to what he wanted."[3] Although she is not tempted with a strong passionate love for

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[1] The Mill on the Floss, p. 196.

[2] Ibid., p. 437.

[3] II, 567.

another, Martha leaves her marriage because of her new-found idealism. During the course of the separation, she becomes increasingly aware that feelings of docility, maternity, and compromise are not noble, the way Maggie conceives them to be, but disgusting.

When Martha first thinks that the marriage can be saved by compromise, she imagines sitting down and reasoning with Douglas: "She saw him as a calm, sensible, brotherly young man who would fully understand what she felt."[1] This "brotherliness" is the essence of Maggie's love for Philip, a feeling she somehow categorizes as more noble than the genuine passion she has for Stephen. Douglas, however, is not looking for a sister, but a mother, and the society he calls in to witness Martha's cruelty to him regards his demands as reasonable. At the insistence of Douglas, Martha has her chat with Mrs. Talbot. When Douglas's unfaithfulness is brought up, Mrs. Talbot responds:

> "Oh, Matty! They aren't really like us, they really aren't, you know."
>
> Martha interrupted with "I don't see why we should treat them like so many children." She resented having to use that "we," associating herself with Mrs. Talbot's division of humanity.
>
> Mrs. Talbot was silent for a while. "Look, Matty," she said in a different voice, brisk and practical, "you simply must realize that everyone feels like this. Everyone."[2]

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[1] II, 561.

[2] II, 582.

The reason why Martha is leaving Douglas is clear to her. She is bored and she never loved him in the first place. Because she does not love him, she is rejecting this kind of mother-son marriage and bringing down the wrath of society. But Martha wants out of that destructive pattern. Douglas's mother says to her: "But, Matty, men are like this, you know."[1]

Some time after Martha leaves Douglas, while she is married to Anton, she does find a man she can love passionately: Thomas Stern. As we have seen in Chapter II, it is this love between them that gives Martha a sense of wholeness and integrity that she has never felt before.

Maggie Tulliver is not so fortunate. After she runs off with Stephen Guest and then decides against marrying him, she returns to St. Ogg in a state bordering on breakdown. When she argues with Stephen against staying with him, she says:

> "O it is difficult--life is very difficult. It seems right to me sometimes that we should follow our strongest feeling;--but then, such feelings continually come across the ties that all our former life has made for us--and would cut them in two. If life were quite easy and simple, as it might have been in paradise, and we could always see that one being first towards whom. . . . I mean, if life did not make duties for us before love comes--love would be a sign that two people ought to belong to each other. But I see--I feel it is not so now: there are things we must renounce in life: some of us must resign love. Many things are difficult and dark to me; but I see one thing quite clearly--that I must not, can not

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[1] II, 594.

> seek my own happiness by sacrificing others. Love is natural; but surely pity and faithfulness and memory are natural too. And they would live in me still, and punish me if I did not obey them. I should be haunted by the suffering I had caused. Our love would be poisoned. Don't urge me; help me--help me, because I love you."[1]

For Maggie the combination of duty and memory to Lucy, Stephen's near fiance and a Tulliver cousin, memory of the beloved father who so hated Philip Wakem's father, the tender and maternal feelings Maggie has for Philip, and the passion for Stephen she insists on characterizing as "egoistic excitability" are three forces which can not be reconciled, and, since she has surrendered passion, the other two, completely apart from the social difficulties she has with trying to work them out, will never form the basis of a stable and integrated life. She has nowhere to go, so George Eliot, after brilliantly and beautifully exposing her Victorian audience to the problems facing a sensitive and intelligent girl with a heart too large for her narrow environment, can only conclude with the fortuitous flood that carries off Tulliver children, brother and sister alike.

Because Martha is more capable of recognizing her unaccountable feelings that have an almost compulsive nature to them, she is better able to deal with them than Maggie who is forced into a vocabulary of "duty" to her family. Also, Martha

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[1]The Mill on the Floss, p. 481.

definitively decides to reject Douglas and is willing to suffer the consequences of that decision. Admittedly, Douglas is far less attractive than Philip, but Maggie is too torn by feelings of loyalty, memories, and an acceptance of the validity of the kind of emotional life she would lead with Philip to discount him in deciding on her future. But after her fake elopement with Stephen, Maggie is left bereft.

Martha, too, is left bereft, for the risk she took in loving Thomas proved true. He died, leaving her as alone as she was before she met him. This state of being alone, however, differs from Maggie's state at the end of The Mill on the Floss in two distinct ways. First, Martha is now off to a new life in England, a change of scene that promises some relief from the now stale environment of Zambesia. Maggie has no such intriguing way out of St. Ogg offered to her. One hundred years has done a fair amount for women. They can earn their own living, one of the requisites Virginia Woolf sets up women in Three Guineas.

Secondly, and even more important, is the fact that Martha has lived her passion, not rejected it. This living of love has given her a sense of integration that she has never known before. She is ready to face her life. Certainly, her life will not be "happy," in any conventional novelistic sense of the word whose stories end before passion has a chance

to wear off, as in Fielding's Tom Jones, but she is whole enough to face the future without cracking up, an ideal, perhaps, that will with this century replace "being happy."

Judging the two novels as bildungsromans, we can see that both authors write about girls growing up and being influenced by their environments, but Maggie's growth, taking place as it does, in a rather enclosed society, can not flower into maturity. Maggie dies at the age of nineteen and does not become a mature person.

Mrs. Lessing, however, in Children of Violence does not stop with the kind of integration that comes to Martha after her affair with Thomas. Passion is seen as an aid in reaching maturity, but the experience of this passion is not enough to guarantee maturity, or, certainly, to guarantee the ability to see the times accurately and to act accordingly. Her search must continue beyond the physical and move into a different realm: the ability to understand and to develop new capabilities for communicating in this violence-stricken world.

Peter Coveny says of Maggie Tulliver: "At the center of her characterization there is a lack of self-knowledge, with its consequent self-indulgence. She is the poignant victim of her fate; and in a very real sense we feel the

author breaking her own heart."[1]

Paradoxically, Lawrence Graver says of Martha Quest in Children of Violence that seeing the individual in relation to the collective is a "relationship which by its nature dwarfs the importance of the individual and his private feelings."[2]

Maggie Tulliver does not have enough information to find out who she is. She has no way of seeing how she has been victimized by her society. The disesteem in which she is held--along with most women of that period--is internalized into a self-despising that she tries to transcend by following a rigorous moral code.

But Martha Quest, precisely because she grows more increasingly aware of how society acts upon her, has at least the possibility of transcending the whirlpool of misapprehended private feelings and entering into a more empathic response the lives of those around her. Admittedly, any novel so dominated by a rigid ideology in which all private emotions are regarded as "bourgeois" or "counterrevolutionary" can never create a character whom the reader will feel has the authentic aura of humanity, but without any reference to the way society acts upon an individual, especially a woman, the

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[1] The Image of Childhood (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 171.

[2] "The Commonplace Book of Doris Lessing," review of Children of Violence, Vol. II, in The New Republic, April 2, 1966, p. 27.

novelist can only create well-portrayed victims or characters sunk into a private emotional anarchy. That novelist will not be able to create a bildungsroman heroine who grows out of an acquiescent herd feeling into a mature, non-victimized self-awareness. Far from dwarfing the individual and his private feelings, the relationship of the individual to the collective is of such monumental importance that lack of this vision will produce only victims like Maggie Tulliver and a spoor of literary critics on her trail trying to decide what was wrong with her that she did not adjust.

We have not, as yet, discussed the character of Martha Quest in terms of the self-exploration of her mind that she goes through when living alone for three months.

A parallel way of discussing the experience Martha has is to turn to R. D. Laing in The Politics of Experience. His thesis is that our normal world forces man into such a state of alienation that we should begin to look carefully at so-called psychotic episodes to see if they might not in reality be ways of healing alienation, rather than manifestations of insanity or a deviation from the norm in a society as sick as ours.

First, he accepts the validity of an "inner" world which he defines as "our way of seeing the external world and all those realities that have no 'external,' 'objective'

presence--imagination, dreams, fantasies, trances, the realities of which modern man, for the most part, has not the slightest direct awareness."[1] Martha Quest recognizes that current culture does not appreciate the inner world when she faces the resistance she feels while reading books of Rosicrucianism and other occult books that are all getting at the same psychological truth. Even though much is made of the unconscious in psychiatry, there is not widespread acceptance of the value of the inner world for healing alienation.

This experiencing of the inner world, according to Laing, has a positive value:

> It would appear that once precipitated into psychosis the patient has a course to run. He is, as it were, embarked upon a voyage of discovery which is only completed by his return to the normal world, to which he comes back with insights different from those of the inhabitants who ever embarked on such a voyage.[2]

It is clear that Martha Quest emerges from her various voyages, starting with her intimation on the veld and finishing with her three-month journey into her mind, with knowledge different from those who have never taken the trip. And Dr. Laing thinks that perhaps men of the future "will see that

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[1]The Politics of Experience (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), p. 98.

[2]George Bateson, ed., Perceval's Narrative, A Patient's Account of his Psychosis (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), pp xiii-xiv, in Laing, op.cit., p. 81.

what we call 'schizophrenia' was one of the forms in which, often through quite ordinary people, the light began to break through the cracks in our all-too-closed minds."[1] Martha, too, senses that what she is working through is something that many people of the age are working through and that its results have a vital importance for the future of man.

But there are dangers to this journey. One patient whom Dr. Laing quotes claims that he almost went mad from his journey because

> " . . . in my case the personal self had grown porous because of my dimmed consciousness. Through it I wanted to bring myself closer to the higher sources of life. I should have prepared myself for this over a long period by invoking in me a higher, impersonal self, since 'nectar' is not for mortal lips."[2]

Martha has unconsciously prepared herself for her journey into her mind by becoming increasingly aware of the permanent person beneath phases, moods, and temporary visitors, so that by the time she takes her voyage into her mind, the permanent person is well enough developed to make practical decisions at the height of seeming insanity. Martha does not get lost inside her own mind.

The patient Dr. Laing is quoting continues: "Then

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[1] Ibid., p. 90.

[2] Karl Jaspers, General Psychology (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1962), pp. 417-418, in Laing, op. cit., p. 94.

came illumination. I fasted and so penetrated into the true nature of my seducers."[1] Martha, too, fasts and visits the seducers of self-hatred and hatred and again a self-hatred so intense it turns into the Devil. For the patient Dr. Laing quotes a new self is born, "a greater and more comprehensive self which impressed me with something of what is eternal, unchanging, immortal and inviolable and which ever since that time has been my protector and refuge."[2] This self, born for the patient during his voyage, has always been present for Martha as the permanent self, but it is in this experience that the permanent self realizes it can get out and participate in the human mind. When Martha is living on the island off the coast of Scotland, she is able to control her participation in the human mind to the point where she can tune in on people. She "hears" a Canadian trapper and "talks" to him.

Another facet of this experience seems to be a heightened sensibility. Jessie Watkins tells Dr. Laing about his experience: "I read newspapers because they gave me newspapers and things to read, but I couldn't read them because everything that I read had a large number of associations with it. I mean I'd just read a headline and the headline of this item of news would have--have quite sort of--very much wider associations in

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[1]Laing, op.cit., p. 94. [2]Ibid., p. 95.

my mind."[1] When Martha was staying with Lynda during her silly period, she, too, while in the sea of sound, would be overwhelmed by associations. For instance, a word like "bread" "proliferated into the phrase 'bread of life,' burst into a pure high song like a thrush, from the Ninth Symphony, then jangled into banality with 'you can't have bread with one meat ball,' gave snatches of recipes for loaves as they were once made on a hearth, leered, jeered, threatened, on a wave-length of mockery."[2]

Jessie Watkins also says that, although he did not have any ideology at the time, he went through a "Stations of the Cross,"[3] the very phrase Martha Quest uses to describe what she goes through toward the end of her voyage.

Dr. Laing concludes about Jessie Watkins' experience: "He trusted his experience of having entered into a state of more, not less, reality, of hypersanity, not subsanity. To others, these two possibilities may be no more distinguishable from each other than chalk from cheese. He had to be careful."[4] And, clearly, Martha, too, feels she has to be extraordinarily careful, especially since she perceives Lynda to have been ruined at the hands of doctors. By the end of The Four-Gated City, there is a group of doctors and patients who are working

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[1] Ibid., p. 106.

[2] V, 474.

[3] Laing, op.cit., p. 109.

[4] Ibid., p. 110.

in secret on these new voyages and powers.

In the last chapter of The Politics of Experience, Dr. Laing writes what seems to be a personal account of his own psychotic experience. At one point he writes: "I must never forget again. All that searching and re-searching those false signposts, the terrible danger of forgetting that one has forgotten. It's too awful."[1] Martha, too, says over and over that she forgets: she forgets what the state of illumination is like until she is in that state again, and she writes during her discovery period: "Next time I read that a man has strangled and raped a child, I know. Or why the death penalty was once public and is still desired by most of the British public. DON'T FORGET THAT YOU KNOW."[2]

Finally, Dr. Laing makes a concluding statement: "The life I am trying to grasp is the me that is trying to grasp it,"[3] and this remark very much parallels the thematic implications of Children of Violence, for what Martha finally realizes at series' end is that what she has always been looking for is inside herself: "Here, where else, you fool, you poor fool, where else has it been, ever. . . ."[4]

Mrs. Lessing is familiar with the work of Dr. Laing, but she does not think he has gone far enough.[5] What this

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[1] Ibid., p. 132.

[2] V, 510.

[3] Laing, op.cit., p. 137.

[4] V, 559.

[5] Studs Terkel interview, May 1969.

comparison shows is that Martha's experiment with her mind is not so individualistic or impossible that it can only be classified as science fiction. Elements of it are somewhat common to other testimonies of schizophrenic episodes.

And Dr. Laing's thesis that these episodes are ways of healing modern alienation is related directly to the theme of Children of Violence. If man persists on relying for the interpretation of experience on the persona of his exterior and social life, he will always be compartmentalizing, classifying, and selecting his experiences in such a way that they will be twisted. Also, his social self will filter out those emotions that are not conducive to life in organized society, leaving him misperceiving and misunderstanding actions of his fellow man. The unalienated man will be the one who can understand the emotion behind any action, including the raping and killing of a child. He will be able to sense a communion with all of his fellow man, for no action or feeling will be alien to his own expanded sense of humanity.

Mrs. Lessing goes further than Dr. Laing by positing the reality of a human mind which the unalienated person can train himself to "tune into" so that he will be able to hear the thoughts of another, or "see" and "hear" what is not sensorily stimulated.

Martha's quest takes her beyond egoic experiences into

"the psychic life which embraces us all,"[1] the existential reality behind the golden dream of the brotherhood of man. It is this reality which must penetrate into more and more men if we are to stop the inhuman conduct of violence. The last remaining world to conquer is man's inner world. It has within it all temptations, all emotions, all desires, all possibilities. It is the permanent part of man that directs and chooses action, that reenacts the primary myth of bringing order out of this chaos. But without this awareness of the inner world, the order of the "rational" man will continue its path of destruction. Alienated man, cut off from the universal psychic life, will always treat some people, nation, class or group as the stranger with the frightening consequences that only technology combined with ignorance can produce: genocide.

And Martha Quest has explored this psychic life. She has become a citizen of the world.

Martha, then, in Children of Violence, is fundamentally the daughter of her age, nurtured like the frogspawn in jelly within the dramatic brutality and uncontrollable devastation of the twentieth century. Rebel and exile, dreamer and

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[1]Carl Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1933), p. 212.

conformist, she is the modern grail-seeker.[1] Neither pure like Percival, highly placed like Oedipus the King, nor gifted like Stephen Dedalus, she journeys through the now provincial peril of the love-hate relationship with her parents. But as the first literary daughter of Mathew Arnold's realization that literature is replacing religion, she is born with a dream. From its inception that dream is twofold: individual and collective; it acts as the lodestone by which, if she can not formulate her desires for man, she can at least reject what she comes to recognize as inhuman or a false turning in man's attempt to be free. Her failures are monumental, her faults incorrigible, and her stubbornness more self-destructive than fruitful. Guides she has none. But her courage, fired by her dream, keeps her struggling, and, at the end of her struggle, she finds herself beneath the calcified layers of societal alienation. She comes to the universal dwelling place of all mankind, the common psychic life. This self-realization becomes her genuine response to the problems

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[1]Although in the Studs Terkel interview (May, 1969) Mrs. Lessing stated she chose the name "Quest" blindly, there could have been an unconscious association of the name to Thomas Mann's English Afterword to The Magic Mountain. There he expressed public thanks to the "young Nemerov" for his critical work on The Magic Mountain and accepted the validity of the framework within which Nemerov placed the novel dating back to the earliest grail seekers. Mann, accepting Nemerov's interpretation, used the word "quest" in referring to Hans Castorp, hero of The Magic Mountain.

facing the human collective and reveals a possible solution to ignorant man armed with such frightening technology.

Let us turn our attention now to other characters in the series. Standing as thematic antagonists to Martha are Mr. Maynard and his powerful wife. Why these two are seen as the arch-enemies is that their combination of cynicism and misused power creates the polarity of thinking that necessarily combats a romantic and optimistic view of mankind born with infinite capacities for good.

We will briefly summarize the Maynards' role in the novel to indicate their thematic relationship to the series.

Apart from Mrs. Quest, the Maynards are the only characters in the series to appear in all five volumes. Their appearance at the end of The Four-Gated City is not so entirely gratuitous as one would imagine.

Mr. Maynard and his wife are first introduced as Binkie's parents. Mrs. Maynard is the doting mother who has nervous headaches over the conduct of her son, and Mr. Maynard is the deeply hurt father whose son has disappointed paternal expectations. Both are manipulative people; Mr. Maynard simply settles in his own mind that Binkie should go into the civil service, and Binkie follows this commandment without thought of protest. When Binkie gets interested in his mother's plans for a sports club, Mr. Maynard says, "I should have put you in

industry," to which Binkie replies, "I say . . . you're not going to start changing jobs for me now? I haven't got time, I'm busy with the Club."[1] The completely accepted assumption that Mr. Maynard should run his son's life is undemocratic and bound to come into clash with Martha's vision.

It is Mr. Maynard who marries Martha and Douglas at the end of Martha Quest. He leaves to perform four other marriages and thinks cynically that there will be four divorces to go through in due time and "five, counting the one he had just finished." The cynicism goes even deeper: "Marry in haste, repent in leisure: he believed firmly, though he had been engaged to his own wife for over a year and knew that he disliked her for the past fifteen."[2] What adds to the cynicism of his private life is that he has been carrying on an affair with Mrs. Talbot for years, and the key to this personal cynicism is summed up in his advice to Martha: one must hide one's true feelings if one is to get along. This duplicity is incompatible with any profound sense of integrity and leaves Mr. Maynard an empty bourgeois shell living a meaningless life of role playing.

This duplicity makes him ruthless in his collective life. He is perfectly willing to assume Maisie is blackmailing him with her pregnancy, and he is perfectly willing to pay

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[1] I, 144.

[2] I, 257, 257.

for an abortion to keep Binkie from marrying her. The Maynards also have no compunction about getting Andrew McGrew transferred out of Zambesia. Mr. Maynard's attitude is that the people in power, use power. His periodic bad moods make him harsh on the natives and poor white people he judges. Neither he nor Mrs. Maynard sees anything irregular about their conduct.

This attitude, developed throughout the five novels, can be seen as clear thematic contrast to Martha's attitudes on life. She cares passionately about life and the underdog. She hates herself for any deviation from acting in accordance with her feelings and thoughts, but it will not be until The Four-Gated City that Martha will be strong enough with a sense of who she is to rid herself of "Matty," that persona which Tommy Brown criticized so long ago, complaining that it was impossible to tell whether or not Martha was saying what she meant.

The Maynards drop out of Martha's London life during the years that young Rita grows up in Zambesia, but when Rita is eighteen and ready to come to London for a visit, the Maynards precede her and have lunch with Martha. This luncheon occurs just after Martha has spent three months in retreat getting to know her own mind.

Now, because Martha is in possession of her own mind,

she has nothing to fear from the Maynards. As she sits in the restaurant, "she was wishing she could put her arms around them both, her old enemies." In fact she is grateful to them, for

> looking back, she could say that of all her educators these had been the most valuable. He, Mr. Maynard, had done her the inestimable service of putting strongly before her, so that she could not possibly mistake it, that most deadly of weapons against what every young person (for a time at least) needs, wants, longs for: he had shown her disbelief, in the shape of an accomplished and withering irony: he had toughened her against ridicule. She, Mrs. Maynard, had shown her power at its ugliest, when it is indirect, subtle, hidden, since she who had wielded it knew so perfectly that she must always be in the right and never doubted herself.[1]

The major reconciliation in Martha's collective life does not occur in this luncheon scene with the Maynards, for Martha can do little for them but be polite and kind. It is Rita, the natural child of Maynard blood and the legal child of socialist thinking, whose dual parentage represents the two collective patterns that Martha has lived through, who is reconciled to the new society and survives the devastation of the old. Through her as representative of the dual collective enslavement possible to man, Mrs. Lessing is able to bind the wounds of Martha's two-sided political views and use Martha as an instrument of salvation for the average collective member, for through Martha Rita meets and marries Mark Coldridge. Nor should it be forgotten that the Mother of this reconciliatory

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[1]V, 528, 528.

character is Maisie Gale McGrew, a woman who, in spite of the turbulence of life and the many men whose bed and name she shared (she had two husbands before Andrew, both of whom were killed in the war, and one husband after him), always retains that redeeming quality of innocence, as she is so described the last time she appears in Landlocked. Perhaps it is the innocence of the Mother, victim of whatever society she finds herself living within and certainly victim of the war--yet incapable because of background and temperament to make the effort of imagination necessary for becoming anything other than victim--that forces the reader to be moved more with pity than anger, more with Martha's sense of concern than Mr. Maynard's vast indifference over the fate of most people in our society, despite their narrowness of vision. Rita is Martha's reconciliation with and acceptance of that society.

However, the characters in the series with whom Martha most closely identifies are those from whom she learns the most. Heading this list are Thomas Stern and Lynda Coldridge.

Superficially, Thomas Stern can be seen within a D. H. Lawrence tradition. It is his peasant background that attracts him to Martha's more sophisticated and neurotic sensibilities. Their affair, in crude ways, parallels Mellors and Lady Chatterly, and certainly the setting of the love affair in the loft above Thomas's garden shed reinforces the Lawrentian image

surrounding their love. Thomas, like Mellors and Constance, forces Martha into becoming a woman, "for by no means easily had she become what Thomas insisted she must be."[1] And for Martha, every experience before Thomas "had become the stuff of childhood."[2]

But there is more to the character of Thomas than the mere stereotyped Lawrentian phallus. Dorothy Brewster quotes from Mrs. Lessing's manuscript of Landlocked on Thomas's death. "He had gone out to die, had made a death for himself, and so he had restored dignity to human beings who chose more often to be animals."[3]

Thomas is far more complex than a mere primitive; his literary antecedents follow the more philosophical lineage of the problematic and complex rebel as outlined in Maurice Friedman's The Problematic Rebel from Job to Bartleby to Ivan Karamazov. Although Mrs. Lessing has deleted from the final copy of Landlocked the sentence Mrs. Brewster chose to quote, the intention of Thomas's death remains, even though the editorializing has been cut. This Polish Jew from the country simply can not accept the world order implicit in his settling down in Zambesia and becoming a successful businessman. The death of his family, his wife's family, his comrades in Poland, and the general horror of the world state of famine, torture,

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[1] Iv, 369.

[2] IV, 369.

[3] Brewster, op.cit., p. 133.

and death weighs so heavily upon him that his own sense of integrity and compassion with the sufferings of human beings forces him into a rebellious stance which first takes the form of a vengeance killing of a British officer in Israel. Unlike Kurtz who wants to exterminate the brutes, Thomas really has no stomach for killing and can not reverse his horror of victimization into a senseless mirror image of victimizer. Largely ignored by his wife, finding no solace in killing, disgusted beyond repair with the business man and householder pose, Thomas comes to the end of something inside himself. Half-mad with the incomprehensibility of evil in the universe, Thomas dies. The death is not, however, entirely senseless for it becomes in the absurd world peopled with hostile killers of various national flavors a bitter and ironic defense of the dignity of man.

About Lynda, Mrs. Lessing is quite specific about the source. She knew a woman who for years did not realize that not everyone can hear the thoughts of others.[1] Lynda is one of those characters about whom E. M. Forster warns in Aspects of the Novel. The character may become so interesting that he may run away with the structure of the novel. Lynda is tall and thin. When made up and dressed properly with gloves covering her bitten nails, she looks beautiful, but when sick,

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[1]Studs Terkel interview (May, 1969).

she walks around preoccupied with hair disheveled and a foul smelling breath.

Her parents were never happy and at an early age Lynda picked up the tensions of "parents at loggerheads who are putting on a front, and quarrel over a teapot rather than over the central difference, because quarrelling over a teapot is safe."[1] Her mother died and her father wanted to marry Rosemary, a woman whose thoughts Lynda heard. Rosemary was thinking that Lynda was spoiled and difficult and that she should be killed. The poor child made the mistake of confiding this information to her father who decided she needed mental care. From the time Lynda was fourteen, she had been in and out of mental hospitals under the care of one doctor after another, given treatment ranging from electric shock to insulin to drugs. And so, "Lynda need never have been ill. . . . Like hundreds of thousands of others; probably millions. There will be no way of knowing how many. These crippled, destroyed people will become another of our statistics, like the 'roughly' forty million dead of the Second World War, or the x million who die when there is a famine, though they could be kept alive on what goes into the dustbins of America or Britain."[2] Although Lynda is not a victim of the violence of war, she is the victim of violence. Rather than accept the possibility of

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[1] V, 494-495.

[2] V, 496-497.

somebody being different, society irrationally defends itself from those who are different by some kind of inhuman treatment ranging from the killing of witches in the Middle Ages to the present treatment of the "insane."

Mrs. Lessing avoids the danger of letting Lynda take over the novel by following Martha's interior dialogue while Lynda is silly, rather than by following Lynda. Mrs. Lessing also remains faithful to Lynda's past history by not allowing her a full, happy-ending recovery. Nor is there any difficulty in Lynda's being symbolic of Martha's emotionality while simultaneously maintaining her own personality.

Such is not the case with Mark, however, whose dual function of being both symbolic of Martha's collective side and also a character in his own right becomes a little burdensome.

What is quite real about Mark is his desire to care for women. Part of the attraction of Lynda was her need for help. He also functions at his best with Patty Samuels when she goes through her nervous breakdown, and he is also most sympathetic to Martha when she collapses over the arrival of her mother. This desire to care, to tend, and to save on the personal level is equitably paralleled by his desire to "save" England--whatever England means--on the political level. His impulse led him away from the creation of a perfect city to

the creation of a Rescue Camp.

What remains unreal about Mark is his sudden conversion from the historical cynic to the enthusiastic Marxist. One feels that he is functioning only symbolically for that political past of Martha's which needs redemption through recognition. And one also feels that the same Mark who could never understand that "nasty mixture of irony and St. John of the Cross and the Arabian Nights" that Martha, Francis, and his beloved Lynda went in for would not be the same Mark who would tack crazy Dorothy's diary to the walls of his study. The symbolic side of Martha representing her concern for the collective would most certainly try to interrelate facts on mental health to the general state of world affairs, but the proper Englishman who could not communicate very well with his son, who polished and brushed his shoes carefully on the days of the Aldermaston Peace Marches, would have no such insight into the world's blindness toward people with embryonic skills that the world needs to survive. His confused posture, however, is a small price for the expansive brilliance of The Four-Gated City, a novel in which characterization of Martha Quest must become so complicated that it spills over into most of the characters in the novel.

But behind the difficulty of Mark's characterization there lies another one, more fundamental.

Mark, as symbolic representative of collective insight, has within this function two opposing roles. On the one hand, he must represent Martha's awareness of the collective difficulty the world finds itself in, and this awareness points toward the necessity of each individual becoming who he is capable of being so that no ecstacy of fright can any longer keep the world from recognizing its genuine problems and their genuine solutions. But since the collective reality has not yet arrived at that halcyon state, it is doomed to the failure of increasing violence and inappropriate attention on appearances of difficulties, rather than genuine ones. The fact that the walls of the study feature maps with a medieval aspect representing war, famine, disease, indicates Martha's sense of the problems of the world, but whoever represents Martha's sophisticated and human political awareness can not simultaneously represent the blind collective's lack of awareness. That Mark, confronted with this dual role--also a character in his own right--comes out to be even tolerably recognizeable as a human being is great credit to Mrs. Lessing's skill. And Mark is more than merely recognizeable as a human being, but he simply does not give the reader a feeling of a well-rounded character that one associates with Lynda, for example. However, Mark draws the correct collective conclusions, but from these conclusions he can not make the next step. He can not

see that the answer lies within each individual man to break down the false barriers that create false problems and to use his imagination to bring all humanity closer together before its unreal fears destroy the world completely.

Yet, the fundamental irony of the novel lies in precisely this paradox, for in arguing that individuals can attain the level of insight necessary to stave off collective disaster, it is difficult to argue that man's collective life is doomed. One is left balancing the truth between this tension of opposites: it is the best of times and it is the worst of times.

It is difficult to leave off talking about the characters in the series without touching on the minor ones. Towering above them for her unforgettableness is Mrs. Quest with her frantic search for old keys to give to Martha as a present, her little habit of leaving her old clothes at Martha's, or her visit with Dr. Lamb in London when she talks uninterruptedly for an hour about Martha's heinous crimes. Throughout the series Mrs. Quest seems to move from monster to a lonely old woman more to be pitied than feared or fought. Clearly this shifting view of Mrs. Quest follows Martha's growing awareness of the life her mother has led and the forces that made her what she is. Always wanting to do her duty to God, country, and husband, Mrs. Quest's satisfaction with such a life grows

drier and drier as her husband gets sicker and sicker and the farm more and more impoverished. The increasing sense of life having passed her by is tragically paralleled by a rising inability to find out why, an awareness which could at least leave her with some sense of peace. Consequently, her later years are marked by an inexplicable irritability and conduct growing more and more irrational. Like the Maynards, Mrs. Quest is also an antagonist to the theme of the series. Like boogie men used to frighten bad children, Mrs. Quest is the perfect examplar of what Martha does not want to become. The old woman, now talking to herself without realizing it, is someone who never found out who she really was. And Mr. Quest is her match. He calls his daughter, "old son," talks interminably about the Great Unmentionable, World War I, between taking his medicine and his temperature. Reality ceased to reach him after that bright flash in the trenches of blood-soaked France. He and his nurse retired in time to the pre-World War I days, never to surface into Martha's far more complex and sophisticated world.

Martha's two husbands, in essentials, are not very different. Both have enough decency to want the world to be better, but neither has the strength of emotionality to realize this vague desire. That Anton shifts from ardent Communist to lap dog son-in-law of a local family is not surprising in

thematic terms of the novel, for a capitalist bureaucrat is no better or worse than a socialist bureaucrat, but his character remains slightly clouded for this shift.

One of the other minor characters whose past life is given the most careful attention is Mrs. Van der Bylt. Through the discussion of her public and personal life, we discover that she is a woman who has ruled out emotion in her life. Consequently, her life has been full and successful, but she lacks insight into areas of emotional conduct. She can not understand why Johnny Lindsay, whom she has unconsciously loved for years, gave up his family and union position simply to be with Flora, the woman he loves. His goodness, which Mrs. Van fully appreciates, may be of a kind impossible for people who do rule out emotion. Mrs. Van, by following the book, is as effective as any enlightened politician can be in Southern Rhodesia, which is to say not successful at all. She must always compromise and these compromises always lead inevitably to tragedy. There is implicit in this portrait an indication that one should choose his politics with his heart, not his head. Emotionality sees more clearly into the fundamental unity of man than reason.

In her reportorial book, Going Home, Mrs. Lessing talks about a kind of person in Southern Rhodesia whom she labels the Useful Rebel whose raison d'etre is to keep getting elected

because he is Progressive and is therefore keeping out of the elected body a Conservative. The Useful Rebel tries to do what he can, especially by becoming the Respectable Patron for groups which, without him, might be disbanded or whose members might be deported. But because he always refuses to go too far, he stunts anything really progressive the group may wish to do. The Useful Rebel ends up being hated by the whites who regard him as a Red or extremist and by the blacks who regard him as a hypocrite and the real enemy to African independence.[1] Mrs. Van falls into this category of the Useful Rebel. She is progressive in spirit and tries to do what she can within the system; in the same way that she tries to be as happy and as satisfied as she can within a marriage which is emotionally dead. It is her refusal to feel, both personally and collectively, that lands her into the unenviable position described by Mrs. Lessing in Going Home. Because of the meeting on the Location, Mrs. Van is not voted back into office because the whites think she has gone too far, and when she tries to work with the blacks, she discovers that they regard her as untrustworthy and perhaps as some kind of spy. The careful outlining done in A Ripple from the Storm of Mrs. Van's private life gives the reader all the information

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[1](New York: Ballantine Books, 1968), pp. 113-116.

he needs to know in order to discover why she ends up disliked by left and right. The over-all relationship of Mrs. Van to the theme of the novel is that, while there is much in her to be admired, her personal failure of assuming that one can live without emotion is reflected in a collective failure. Those pragmatists who follow the middle way and hope to reform the system from within are the ones who ironically enough most support it. Mrs. Lessing may have been imbued with this view from Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience," for Thoreau argues that "those who, while they disapprove of the character and measure of a government, yield to it their allegiance and support, are undoubtedly its most conscientious supporters, and so frequently the most serious obstacles to reform."[1]

In The Four-Gated City, Graham Patten and Phoebe Coldridge take over the roles of the Useful Rebels. Graham Patten is first introduced as a young dandy from Cambridge who talks literary nonsense at a party with Mark. His chief talent is his ability to spot trends: in clothes for men, in the coming rage over jazz, in television, in the theatre. Always caught up in any new movement one way or another, he never passes beyond the phase of exchanging one social pose for another, so that, at novel's end, it is his television talk

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[1] Civil Disobedience (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 242.

show that causes so much trouble for Francis's community. Graham Patten is one who most conveniently lives with contradictions side by side.

> Graham Patten, for instance, still a Marxist, and fond of saying that "everything is run by the dozen men who were in my year at Oxford and Cambridge." He said this with pride. As his father might have said, or as Mark's father might have said. Which did not prevent him and everybody else saluting the new classlessness, which meant that some talents from the provinces had been attracted to London and had been absorbed--exactly as it always happened.[1]

Phoebe Coldridge never loses faith in the Labour Party and assumes that "when we get in" things will change. But the Labour Party gets in and nothing changes. Her blind faith becomes more and more rigid so that she can seriously pose as a social solution, young people working earnestly for the election of the Labour Party. When the great disaster occurs, both she and Graham Patten are either killed or still living underground in governmental tunnels so secret that no one knows how to dig them out.

In Retreat to Innocence Jan Brod tells an anecdote of a liberal. As a boy, Jan was almost expelled from school for political activities, but his headmaster, although not standing up entirely for Jan, did effect a compromise with his Nazi teacher whereby the young radical could stay in school. Jan tells with glee what happened to him: "This headmaster hated

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[1]V, 443.

the teacher, but seeing which way the wind was blowing over Europe, and how strong the Nazis were, he merely deplored the existence of this teacher. Not that it did him much good, because when the Nazis came in, the teacher was a big man overnight, and the first thing he did was to have the headmaster shot, no doubt as a revenge for having his nose rubbed in the milk of Liberalism for so long. So the man might just as well have been shot earlier in a good cause, really."[1]

Mrs. Lessing is less didactic in her treatment of the Liberal in the Children of Violence series, but the attitude seems somewhat the same. Those who recognize the injustice of a system and continue to support it are the biggest obstacles to meaningful change.

The conclusion of our discussion on character points quite firmly in the direction of seeing the series as dominated by the theme. Martha's character becomes more passive and simultaneously expansive to accomodate for the thematic intention of her growth into the awareness of man's common psychic life. The Maynards are antagonists throughout the series. Lynda is Martha's emotionality, and the difficulties of Mark's character are related to his complicated thematic role. Mr. and Mrs. Quest are the World War I victims, and Mrs. Van, Graham Patten, Phoebe Coldridge are all the useful

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[1]Doris Lessing, Retreat to Innocence (London: Michael Joseph, 1956), p. 62.

rebels. Anton's character suffers slightly because of his thematic shift from Communist bureaucrat to capitalist bureaucrat. It would seem that whenever there is a conflict between the rounding out of character or the heightening of the thematic point, the latter wins out continually.

CHAPTER IV

IMAGERY AS THEMATIC DEVICE

The dominant imagery of the series, Children of Violence, centers around Martha's early adolescent and favorite dream of a "city--foursquare and colonnaded." This image runs throughout the series, gathering in strength, meaning, and complexity until it becomes one of the positive moral centers of the series. This image also develops thematic importance which becomes increasingly obvious, especially in The Four-Gated City.

However, before we discuss this central image, we will begin with a discussion of its opposite image--the destroyer of the city--ants. Mrs. Lessing often employs ant imagery and even has a short story called "The Antheap." The sense of destruction that frequently clusters around this image is clearly seen in a short story called "A Sunrise on the Veld," the story of an unnamed adolescent boy filled with feelings of omnipotence on his fifteenth birthday. He wakes up early and goes hunting on the veld, where he sees a buck die and watches the ants remove the still warm flesh:

> It was right--that was what he was feeling. It was right and nothing could alter it.
>
> The knowledge of fatality, of what has to be, had gripped him and for the first time in his life; and he was left unable to make any movement of brain or body, except to say: "Yes, yes. That is what living is." It had entered his flesh and his bones and grown in to the furthest corners of his brain and would never leave him. . . .
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> Suffering, sick, and angry, but also grimly satisfied with his new stoicism, he stood there leaning on his rifle, and watched the seething black mound grow smaller. At his feet, now, were ants trickling black with pink fragments in their mouths, and there was a fresh acid smell in his nostrils. He sternly controlled the uselessly convulsing muscles of his empty stomach, and reminded himself: the ants must eat too! At the same time he found that the tears were streaming down his face, and his clothes were soaked with the sweat of that other creature's pain.[1]

It takes the ants only a short time to pick clean the bones:

> He began to swear, as if the shortness of the time was in itself unbearable, using the words he had heard his father say. He strode forward, crushing ants with each step, and brushing them off his clothes, till he stood above the skeleton, which lay sprawled under a small bush. It was picked-clean. It might have been lying there years, save that on the white bone were pink fragments of gristle. About the bones, ants were ebbing away, their pincers full of meat.
>
> The boy looked at them, big black ugly insects. A few were standing and gazing up to him with small glittering eyes.
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> "Go away!" he said to the ants, very coldly. "I am not for you--not just yet, at any rate. Go away."[2]

Here, ants, fatality, and destruction are intermingled. The demise of the small buck illuminates for the young boy the ephemerality of his own life, even at the early age of fifteen. It is not so much the death of the small buck, but the ants'

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[1] African Stories, p. 64. [2] Ibid., p. 65.

merciless feast on the carcass that gives to the young boy this sense of the accidentalness of his existence. Destruction becomes accepted as an inevitable part of the world.

This destruction can take many shapes, and it is in The Children of Violence that ant imagery is associated with many kinds of destruction. The first mention of ants occurs in Martha Quest in a description of her home:

> In the middle of the floor was a pole of tough thornwood, to hold the end of the ridgepole. It had lain for weeks in a bath of strong chemical, to protect it from ants and insects; but now it was riddled with tiny holes, and if one put one's ear to it there could be heard a myriad tiny jaws at work, and from the holes slid a perpetual trickle of faint white dust.[1]

This pole "sounded like a drum when tapped"[2] because of the constant gnawing of ants and insects. That the pole should be central to the Quest home, but not really supporting the roof because of a slight displacement of the angle at which it abuts the ceiling and hollow because of the constant destruction carried on by the ants, indicates the way Martha sees her home and the constantly destructive interrelationships between her mother, her father, and herself. There is nothing in this home but concealed emotion; an inwardness of Martha's father centering on his illnesses--imagined at this point in the series--and his recollections of the war; a pose of her mother that assumes the family is happy and respectable, and a sense

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[1] I, 24.

[2] I, 25.

of parental rejection by both of them that Martha feels so strongly. There is nothing within this household to help in the creation of the fabled city. The politic ants eat without interference.

Even just before the height of Martha's first illumination when the feelings of joy and sorrow are heightening together, ants are mentioned to carry the emotional burden of pain: "She noted a single white-stemmed tree with its light cloud of glinting leaf rising abruptly from the solid-packed red earth of an anthill, all bathed in a magical sky-reflecting light, and her heart moved painfully, in exquisite sadness."[1] This particular sadness has about it some quality of the kind found in Tennyson's "Tears, Idle Tears," touching as it does some deep root of melancholia beyond any objective correlative, except, perhaps, one as vague as "the human condition."

Ants are mentioned in a far more specific context the next time they are encountered. Martha has just finished with one of her interminable arguments with her mother and goes to her father, looking, hoping for some solution that he may be able to present her with--rather the way Martha pictures the shop girl coming up with an answer in The Four-Gated City. Apart from suggesting to Martha that it is probably time she moved out and found a job in the city, Mr. Quest, quite

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[1] I, 61.

naturally, has nothing to suggest.

> Suddenly he remarked, in a dreamy voice, "Makes you think, doesn't it, seeing these ants? I wonder how they see us, like God, I shouldn't be surprised? When that soil specialist was out last year, he said ants have a language, and a police force--that sort of thing."[1]

In this passage the despicable antlike life is given a context within its own frame of reference, apart from the emotional content of Martha and her father. The life of the ants combines everything antithetical to any kind of freedom for man. They live in authoritarian community, regulated by force; their "language" is of the meanest and most inexpressive variety, and man in relation to the ants has the force and destructiveness of a God.

The passage also conveys the sense of tension and anxiety Martha's father is under in being unable to mitigate the spiteful feeling between Martha and her mother, and Martha's own helplessness is also captured in the mindlessness of the insect community.

When Martha finally leaves the farm, she visits "the ant heap where she had knelt in ecstatic prayer during her 'religious phase.'"[2] Here is stated quite clearly Martha's attitude on religion, and taken in conjunction with her father's remark that the ants must see people like God, we can better appreciate the full impact of the scorn Martha heaps on Mr.

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[1] I, 68.

[2] I, 90.

Maynard when she says he acts like God. Religion is clearly seen as part of the destructive force that prohibits man from building his beautiful city.

The only other reference to ants in Martha Quest comes during her visit to the farm when she introduces Douglas to her family. The image repeats in tone and meaning the original use of ants: "Inside the thatch, she knew, were a myriad small creatures, spiders, working ants, beetles. . . ."[1]

Even though Martha moves away from the farm and the rest of her life is spent in one city or another--but not the dream one--the image of ants continues and expands in meaning to include other aspects of social life that prohibit the creation of Utopia. The next time ants are used in A Proper Marriage this meaning includes man's most destructive activity --war. Douglas is flying home from up North.

> At once the plane swung round and began lumbering away to the end of the strip. It turned. Over the brick shack a funnel of white silk rippled out. As the aircraft roared past and up they could see a cloud of fluttering butterflies around it, like flying ants around a street lamp.[2]

Although the ants are directly related to the butterflies, harmless creatures, surely, the use of the aircraft indicates a vague associational relationship of ants to warfare.

The ants continue to gather unpleasant association after unpleasant association. While Martha is trying to decide

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[1] I, 245.

[2] II, 494.

whether or not to have another child with Douglas, she tries to imagine her way out of her dilemma by conceiving of herself as a happy mother of a large, large family. "And, severely suppressing the pangs of pure panic that kept rising in her every moment at the idea of abandoning the person she felt herself to be, she set herself to imagine the house, all its rooms full of children, and she in the middle like a queen ant."[1] Clearly, holy maternity, especially combined as it is in her fantasy far from her real self, becomes antlike and destructive of genuine human growth--it is seen as a way out of becoming oneself.

But there are many ways to prevent a dream from becoming a reality on a collective level, and one way is to keep people living within a gripping poverty that makes human development practically impossible. When Martha, now in her socialist phase in A Ripple from the Storm, visits the Coloured Location to sell Watchdog newspapers, she visits a poor family and "small black ants swarmed along the cracks,"[2] that are present in the walls.

Then, when Martha gets sick and Anton moves in to nurse her, she realizes that they will probably have an affair. She thinks:

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[1]II, 535.

[2]III, 72.

> I've been irritated because of the way these men just fall for us, from one minute to the next, but what's the difference between that and me and Anton getting involved. . . . Why? Is it because he's the leader of the group? But that's despicable. And actually what do we have in common?[1]

What Martha is on the verge of sensing is the pattern that she must live through by getting involved with Anton and the thought is too much for her in her sick state, so she goes off into a semidelirium:

> Her body, precisely defined in areas of heat and cold, lay stretched out among sheets that felt gritty and sharp, as if she were lying on sand, or on moving ants.[2]

Martha's emotional discomfort translates itself into her physical sickness, and the feeling of ants prevents her from thinking through what it is she must live through.

Ants are mentioned more frequently in Landlocked than in any other novel in the series. The conjecture to make here is that because Martha is learning about destruction through Thomas Stern and through the gradually released reports about the extent of the damage of World War II and the frightening dimensions of Stalinism, the image of destruction, "ants," will become more frequently mentioned.

First, in the beginning of Landlocked, Martha senses that she is on the verge of a breakdown, a realization that comes to her in a dream about herself, pictured as a house with

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[1] III, 107.

[2] III, 107.

many different rooms. If Martha does not keep these rooms together, she will crack. Ants are mentioned.

> Her dream at this time, the one which recurred, like a thermometer, or gauge, from which she could check herself, was of a large house, a bungalow, with half a dozen different rooms in it, and she, Martha (the person who held herself together, who watched, who must preserve wholeness through a time of dryness and disintegration) moved from one room to the next, on guard. These rooms, each furnished differently, had to be kept separate--had to be, it was Martha's task for this time. For if she did not--well, her dreams told her what she might expect. The house crumbled drily under her eyes into a pile of dust, broken brick, a jut of ant-eaten rafter, a slant of rusting iron. And then, while she watched, the ruin changed: it was the house on the kopje, collapsed into a mess of ant-tunnelled mud, ant-consumed grass, where red ant-made tunnels wove a net, like red veins, over the burial mound of Martha's soul, over the rotting wood, rotting grass, subsiding mud; and bushes and trees, held at bay so long (but only just, only very precariously) by the Quests' tenancy, came striding in, marching over the fragments of substance originally snatched from the bush, to destroy the small shelter for the English family that they had built between teeming earth and brazen African sky.[1]

The passage speaks for itself. Here, Martha's threatening sense of disintegration combines with the actual disintegration that overtakes the family house on the hill when the Quests move into the city. The disintegration that Martha feels is within herself. She is, at this time in her life, playing so many roles that her sense of her private center can not be uncovered. The repetition of the word "ants" continues to reinforce those associational meanings now clustering more and more strongly around the word.

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[1]IV, 286-287.

The next time "ants" is used, Martha is having a conversation with Solly Cohen about their various contacts with an African group. Although Solly is a Trotskyite, Martha can not refrain from telling him the truth about the situation because she knows she is a very poor liar. Solly rather sarcastically compliments her on the honesty. She replies: "It occurred to me recently there's no point in being anything else, living in this--ant nest."[1] Clearly, the repressive society of Zambesia can be nothing else but an ant nest.

War and ants become more directly associated in the next reference. Martha is picturing to herself what Europe was like two years previously: "Europe was crawling with tiny ants, murdering each other." This thought occurs to Martha as she and Jack Dobie are driving to Thomas's farm to have lunch and she pictures herself and Jack as "two tiny antlike figures"[1] counting them in, then, with the destruction war brought to Europe.

The last three references to ants in Landlocked all center around Thomas. While he was living on a native Resevoir, he wrote a manuscript, part of which was about the life of the tribe. Another part of the manuscript was the ravings of a mad man with Yiddish jokes, anecdotes from his past, cryptic remarks. The manuscript fell into Martha's hands, and the pages

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[1] IV, 428, 429.

"were in a dreadful state, for the ink had run where rain water had dripped on them, probably from an ill-thatched roof. Ants had left half a hundred sheets looking like red-edged lace paper." One of Thomas's cryptic remarks was: "If you keep your grain on stilts, to save it from the white ants, why not walk on stilts yourself?" This remark is picked up again: "Kill. Kill, my comrades, and make a good meal of it. The meal is kept on stilts away from the white ants, and so are you."[1]

It's the killers who protect themselves from the ravages of acquiescence in suffering. They are the ones who keep themselves protected in their lives of mediocrity, the way Thomas's hated enemy Sergeant Tressell had done. But it is these same feelings of compassion intertwined with a sense of helplessness that makes Thomas die. His ant-eaten manuscript embodies the final state of his soul; his madness seeps through the hundreds of tiny ant holes that remain of his confused writings.

The references to ants are not discontinued in The Four-Gated City; rather their associations continue to expand. The first reference is to Jack's hunger: "Hunger hit Jack like a mania, a fever: when he had to eat it was, he said, as if he were being eaten alive by a nestful of ants." Martha

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[1]IV, 533, 534, 535.

wonders about Jack's mania and considers that eating for Jack is "an end in itself,"[1] but she continues to wonder what should an end be. Jack's mania is destructive, but beyond this reference to food, his later all-consuming mania turns him into nothing but a force that wants to corrupt young women. This form of dehumanization, like Thomas's madness, is imagistically represented by ants.

Thomas's kind of madness is pinpointed more precisely in The Four-Gated City when Martha drags out his old manuscript, or "heap of ant-eaten notes," and thinks of Thomas's "sardonic anger" and "nihilism"; these words give further meaning to the image of ants. Later, Mark discovers Thomas's "ant-laced heap of manuscript"[2] and finally turns parts of it into a book about a Jewish brother and sister from concentration camps who become violent Zionists--merely reversing the pattern of destruction, rather than escaping from it.

The next reference to ants has a slightly ambiguous quality to it, much like the one in A Proper Marriage where the butterflies around the warplane are represented as being like ants. This ambiguous reference is to Colin's Russian wife, Galina, who says that life is a precious gift, and she can not understand anyone wanting to kill himself. "She sounded both prim and life-enhancing. . . . Priggishness was

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[1] V, 62, 62.

[2] V, 176, 176, 176.

perhaps after all a sign of virtue, as antheaps in hot countries show that water lies far below."[1] The priggishness and lack of understanding on any emotional level of the forces that drive some people, like Sally-Sarah, to suicide would clearly be characterized by Mrs. Lessing in a negative way, but Galina's respect for life is positive. Consequently, the ant imagery here is ambivalent.

We can summarize these various uses of the word "ants" by recalling the cluster of meanings that rounds out this reference. On the collective side there is represented warfare, coercive use of force, poverty, religion, maternity. On the individual side they represent various states of personal desiccation: Martha's relationship with her parents, her impending breakdown, Thomas's madness of sardonic anger and nihilism, Galina's lack of understanding.

The combination of these individual and collective evils represent those drives and forces that act within man and upon his society and which prevent him from attaining the personal ideal of freely shared emotion and the collective ideal of a brotherhood of justice. Because the image of ants is the one around which coalesces these important thematic ideas, we can see how the image of ants has an important relationship to the theme of the series.

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[1] V, 314.

Although Mrs. Lessing's use of ants as some kind of negative pole around which gather those ideas and forces that keep men from becoming what they are capable of being probably springs from her experience on the Rhodesian veld, a most interesting literary precedent should not be overlooked. The Grand Inquisitor in The Brothers Karamazov concludes his frighteningly gloomy portrait of man by saying: "All that man seeks on earth--that is, someone to worship, someone to keep his conscience, and some means of uniting all in one unanimous and harmonious ant-heap."[1] The unanimous and harmonious ant-heap is, of course, antithetical to a writer like Mrs. Lessing whose heroine dreams of a driving individualism.

But the imagery of ants does not exhaust the imagery in the series, nor do the negative ideas it comes to represent exhaust Mrs. Lessing's view of the world. She is able to see destruction for what it is and then transcend such destruction, not through a Pollyanna hopefulness that springs more from naivete than depth, but through a consistent attitude toward life that can, at its very least, lead to individual salvation, if not collective solutions.

The vision of what is hopeful about man is at the core of the series, and it is developed on an imagistic level in the

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[1] Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, trans. by Constance Garnett (New York: Random House, 1950), pp. 305-306.

development of the image of the city.

The history of the use of the city as an image is rich and varied. One thinks immediately of the Bible with its hope of a promised land or the new city, the New Jerusalem. In the Apocalypse is the sentence: "I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." Saint Augustine with his Civitas Dei and Civitas terrena, the city of faith and the city of unbelief, establishes a struggle between the two as the principal theme of the history of the world. "During the earthly course of history the two cities are not neatly separated, they penetrate each other."[1] Dante's City of Dis in the sixth circle of the Inferno is guarded by the Medusa of despair, an apt symbol for the city of hopelessness. In John Bunyon's prose allegory Pilgrim's Progress, Christian flees the City of Destruction and sets out for the Celestial City beyond the Wicket-gate. So great and varied is the image of the city (although there are no novels where an earthly city of happiness is envisioned and attained) that Charles Williams talks of it as one of the five great images in literature.[2] Unlike the Nation, however, Williams argues that the City involves "the thought of Choice. . . . We can deliberately

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[1]Berthold Altaner, Patrology (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), p. 505.

[2]Quoted in Dorothy L. Sayers, The Poetry of Search and the Poetry of Statement and Other Posthumous Essays on Literature, Religion and Language (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1963), p. 75.

found the City; the Nation can, at best, only appear."[1] What connects Mrs. Lessing's city to the ones mentioned above is the Utopian and volitional quality attached to Martha Quest's vision of this city, but this city like St. Augustine's becomes inextricably bound to its mirror image city of unbelief or despair.

The city is established early in the series when fifteen-year-old Martha dreams her favorite adolescent fantasy:

> There arose, glimmering whitely over the harsh scrub and the stunted trees, a noble city, set foursquare and colonnaded along its falling, flower-bordered terraces. There were splashing fountains, and the sound of flutes; and its citizens moved, grave and beautiful, black and white and brown together; and these groups of elders paused, and smiled with pleasure at the sight of the children--the blue-eyed, fair-skinned children of the North playing hand in hand with the bronze-skinned, dark-eyed children of the South. Yes, they smiled and approved these many-fathered children, running and playing among the flowers and the terraces, through the white pillars and tall trees of this fabulous and ancient city. . . .[2]

One year later, Martha is still having the same vision, only more detailed.

> She could have drawn a plan of that city, from the central market place to the four gates. Outside one of the gates stood her parents, the Van Rensbergs, in fact most of the people of the district, forever excluded from the golden city because of their pettiness of vision and small understanding; they stood grieving, longing to enter, but barred by a stern and remorseless Martha--for unfortunately one gets nothing, not even a dream, without paying heavily for it, and in

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[1]Charles Williams, The Image of the City and Other Essays (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 92-93.

[2]I, 21.

> Martha's version of the golden age there must always be at least one person standing at the gate to exclude the unworthy.[1]

The first cluster of ideas that centers around the dream city, reminiscent of Blake's Songs of Innocence, is a society without racism--black, brown and white children play together freely and unself-consciously while the adults smile approval. The dream of children playing, perhaps an appropriate dream for a child of fifteen, grows more mature in the year that passes. Now the denizens of the dream city become people of vision and broad understanding, excluding necessarily the petty people who comprise Martha's daytime life. But Martha's adolescent rage is so strong that she can do little but concentrate on what is outside that city--the adults around her whom she despises.

When Martha is invited to the dance at the Van Rensbergs the coming season, it "seemed like an entrance into another sort of life, for she was seeing the Van Rensbergs' house magnified, and peopled with youthful beings who had less to do with what was likely than with that vision of legendary cities which occupied so much of her imagination."[2] Clearly, the vision of the city, apart from its physical structure, has nothing to do with any kind of planned Utopian government well worked out in Martha's mind so much as with a particular

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[1] I, 21.

[2] I, 73.

kind of person, and those not the type she meets at the crowded and unpretentious Van Rensberg farmhouse.

But if the city does not exist, still the kind of people who inhabit it must, so Martha thinks, because after she meets with people who seem to catechize her on her beliefs, she thinks, "some door should have opened, so that she might walk in, a welcomed daughter into that realm of generous and freely exchanged emotion for which she had been born--and not only herself, but every human being; for what she believed had been built for her by the books she read, and those books had been written by citizens of that other country; for how can one feel exiled from something that does not exist?"[1]

The next time she dreams of the city is after reading the New Statesman. The periodical so completely expresses her views that she feels at home.

> She was at home, she was one of a brotherhood. Yet when she laid down the journal she could not have said in detail what she had read, what were the facts; but she gave, unconsciously, a great quivering sigh, and lay back on her bed, eating chocolate and dreaming of a large city (it did not matter which, for it shared features of London and New York and Paris, and even the Moscow of the great novelists) where people who were not all false and cynical and disparaging, like the men she had met that afternoon, or fussy and aggressive, like the women--where people altogether generous and warm exchanged generous emotions.

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[1] I, 89.

> And from this dream she passed to her older one, so much older than she knew, of that golden city whose locality was vague, but until now had been situated somewhere between the house on the kopje and the Dumfries Hills (which area was in fact inhabited by the Afrikaans community), the white-piled, broad-thoroughfared, tree-lined, four-gated, dignified city where white and black and brown lived as equals, and there was no hatred or violence.

This last dream of Martha's ends with the sad reflection that if such a city is to be created the sad people she met at the Left Book Club meeting will not be the ones to create it. This sadness turns into a kind of cynicism which grows increasingly stronger in A Proper Marriage, the novel wherein Mr. Maynard's smoothly polished cynicism will hold a deadly attraction for Matty, caught as she is in the bourgeois monster of repetition. Consequently, it is not surprising that in this novel no mention is made of Martha's dream of the city, only a narrational remark that she almost forgot her original view of mankind as noble but betrayed.

In A Ripple from the Storm, Martha's enthusiasm for Communism resurrects her adolescent dream. While Jasmine and Martha stare out the window at a ragged kaffir, they both sweep him up out of his present state of poverty and despair and enfold him in their vision of the future.

> Each saw an ideal town, clean, noble and beautiful, soaring up over the actual town they saw, which consisted in this area of sordid little shops and third-rate cafes. The

> ragged child was already a citizen of this ideal town, co-citizens with themselves; they watched him out of sight around the corner smiling: it was as if they had touched him with their hands in friendship.[1]

Later on in A Ripple from the Storm, Martha dreams of "that country," a phrase she uses to describe for herself a particular region of sleep which she often visited especially when she was tired or sick. "That country was pale, misted, flat; gulls cried like children around violet-coloured shores. She stood on coloured chalky rocks with a bitter sea washing around her feet and the smell of salt was strong in her nostrils. Now she thought: Well, I suppose it's England . . . but how can I be an exile when it has nothing to do with me?"[2] As we have pointed out previously, it is this island that becomes for Martha the exiled kingdom by the sea where her life approximates life in the dream city, for the other exiles with her do seem to live, in spite of the harsh conditions of physical existence, within an integrated community and with a kind of open and freely exchanged emotion.

In the following volume, Landlocked, one finds again no mention of the city. The schema for the appearance of the image of the city follows an alternating pattern with the city mentioned in volumes I, III, and V, but omitted in volumes II and IV. This pattern gives us a small insight into the thematic nature of the image. It would seem that Martha's life goes

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[1] III, 37. [2] III, 94.

through phases of idealism, cynicism, idealism, cynicism. The idealism in Martha Quest is typically pubescent fed by the waters of romantic poetry. The cynicism in A Proper Marriage represses that idealism and leaves Martha in a sleep-logged state of cynicism over her inability to control her life, for she is married to a man she does not love, and she can not seem to escape. The idealism in the following volume, A Ripple from the Storm, springs from her adamant attraction and adherence to Communism. In Landlocked, a dry period sets in, not so much of cynicism but of a sense of tragedy over the unforeseen carnage wrought by the hideously destructive war. The pattern she must live through in this novel is an increasing understanding of the potentially destructive forces in man.

Before we discuss the city imagery in The Four-Gated City, let us summarize what it is that the city represents to Martha Quest. The only political reality about this mythical place which has its roots deep in the personal and collective unconscious of man is that it is free of racism and all citizens are co-citizens in this shining new world. Far more important, we discover that these same citizens are people unlike those she has ever met--they are capable of exchanging emotion freely with no undercurrents of discontent or hidden animosities. Martha herself feels exiled from this place she has never traveled, but the colors of its country she flies in her heart, waiting for the day when she will be initiated into some kind

of brotherhood composed of people from this magic land. She will agree with them doctrinally and be welcomed into the city.

In The Four-Gated City the city appears once again, but not only in dream form. Here the descriptions of London take on meaning. Postwar London to which Martha arrives still has areas of bombed-out ruins not yet rebuilt and contrasts to the dream city. For instance, Martha watches men working beneath the street in a great crater: "Spades and picks tore into a dull heavy damp soil. It was a yellowish soil. In it was embedded a system of clay pipes, iron pipes, knotted cables. No roots. No trees in this street. Not one tree: therefore, no roots. Martha had never before seen soil that was dead, that had not roots."[1] Similar in tone to the landscape in Eliot's The Wasteland, the London that confronts Martha, encrusted with layers of technological substructures, is in its bowels a dead city.

On its surface, London is all division: "Invisible boundaries, invisibly marked territories--just as, across the river a boundary could be marked by an old hulk of timber with river salt in its seams, so that one side of it was the riverbank, the other a landlubber's country, here the corner of a street or the hour of a day could say: Here a certain kind of order ends."[2] Dead in its depth, divided on its surface,

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[1] V, 8.

[2] V, 33.

London also has a forgotten and multi-layered past:

> If this were a ruined city, a poisoned city, what would the excavators a hundred years later deduce from what they saw here? Facing Martha, the surface of a jagged wall, three stories of it, rose up sharp from the low edges of rubble. There were three fireplaces, one above another. Each level of wall was tinted a different colour, as if by moss or lichen: wallpaper soaked and dried, soaked and dried, again and again. Pale green. Above that, pinkish shaggy brown. Above that dim yellow. Coming closer, it could be seen, where a long strip had been torn away off the green, that beneath was a darker green. Martha got up onto an edge of wall and slid her fingernails under the edge of paper. A thick sog of paper: layers of it, now stuck together. Once each had been a loving and loved skin for the walls, which held the lives of people. But they were fused together, like a kind of felt. Martha pulled. A lump came away. Picking at the layers, she counted thirteen.[1]

The dream city and this real city of London are fused together in a section where Mrs. Lessing is describing the London of the sixties:

> Somewhere in our minds there is an idea of a city. A City, rather! A solid, slow-moving thing, not far off that picture of a city presented by Mark, where streets ran north and south and east and west and known landmarks could be referred to through generations. But London heaved up and down, houses changed shape, collapsed, whole streets were vanishing into rubble, and arrow shapes in cement reached up into the clouds. Even the street surfaces were never level; they were always "up," being altered, dug into, pitted, while men rooted in them to find tangled pipes in wet earth, for it seemed as if the idea of a city or town as something slow-changing, almost permanent, belonged to the past when one had not needed so many pipes, cables, tunnels, and types of machinery to keep it going. If time were slightly speeded up, then a city now must look like fountains of rubble cascading among great machines, while buildings momentarily form, change colour like vegetation, dissolve, re-form.[2]

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[1] V, 73-74.

[2] V, 288.

The city, in both its imagined and real form, becomes analogous to the human personality. London has no roots, nothing living through which it can grow in some kind of organic way. Beneath the surface, everything is dead--only mechanical equipment to keep London functioning. If we remember Lynda living in the basement of the house on Radlett Street and the vital importance she has for Martha finding herself, then the lifelessness of the London underground becomes profoundly associated with a personality estranged from his psychic source. Also, just as London divides on its surface into different and distinct areas, each with its own order and having little to do with the neighboring order, we can profitably recall Martha's estimate of herself as she arrives in London: she perceives herself as being divided. Even when she moves in with Mark, she adopts different masks and poses to wear with different people in different situations. Finally, the multi-layered past of London microcosmically encapsulated in Martha's tearing off layers of wallpaper from a deserted and ruined building represents the many phases of her past that Martha has lived through. London, as it exists and changes, becomes representative of "past selves, past voices, temporary visitors," a personality unaware of its permanence within an organic center.

The imagined city, however, even as we briefly encounter it in the section quoted above, is "slow-changing," and

"permanent" belonging to a less complicated past. Its surface is ordered and the entire appearance has about it a sense of totality. The personality represented by this city has to belong to the past, the time of safety and the elm tree, as Thomas would phrase it, but the complications of twentieth century history have made such simplicity almost impossible.

There is another section in which the real city and the imagined city are interconnected. This time Martha is walking along the streets and window-shopping. The postwar quality of goods is so poor that she is not tempted to buy but rather imagines that "under one's feet stretched invisible warehouses of luxury and richness and beauty--miles of them, caverns of them."[1] In this chimeric underground "were stored for miles and miles the most fabulous carpets and tapestries and silks in the world."[2] The constant irony is manifested in the grotesque juxtaposition of the dream and the reality.

There is also a curious irony connected with the title of the final volume, The Four-Gated City. The only two times in the series that the city has attached to it the appelation "four-gated" are in Martha Quest. The city that Mark and Martha create together and which he turns into a short novel and a real refugee center is never described as four-gated. There is no four-gated city in The Four-Gated City.

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[1] V, 77.

[2] V, 77.

This apparent omission may be quite unimportant, but it may also be the key to a distinction between kinds of dreaming and kinds of reality.

First, let us examine Mark's city. Talk of it comes up when Martha is still thinking of leaving Mark. Marks asks: "Well, how do you want to live, then? Everything you say, all the time, implies there is another way to live. Did you know that?"[1] Martha replies that she does not want to have to split herself up. Mark proceeds to tell Martha that what she is really seeking is the "mythical city," and the two of them together reconstruct this city: "Great roads approached the city, from north and south, east and west. When they had fairly entered it, they divided it into arcs, making a circling street, inside which were smaller ones: a web of arcs intersected by streets running in to a centre."[2] The gradual arrival of the circled streets are not announced by gates of any kind; in fact, the city seems to grow up organically and become more concentrated in the center. Later, this same geographical sense of the city's shape is reinforced:

> Travellers coming in from the desert found it hard to say when the exact moment was when their feet found the right road. Then trees appeared, on either side; then in the distance, the first houses of the city. For leagues of hot dusty travelling, a silent yellow sand, and then over

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[1] V, 132.

[2] V, 133.

it, a blue sky where birds wheeled, into which rose domes and spires and the sounds of voices.[1]

This city, unlike London, is gardened and well-planned; even every house with its occupants is planned. Its center is probably in a small room under the library (the underground is important again). When the rulers of the larger city which grew outside came and asked to buy the secret, they were told "it could only be earned, or accepted as a gift."[2] Needless to say, the stronger force of the larger city came and killed all the inhabitants of this archetypal one. "But, of course, they hadn't the secret, and now the old city of the legend became exactly as the outer city had been. But it was from this time that the city in fact reached history--before that it had not been known, except to the people who lived in it and around it. Now it reached a great climax of fame and power; and it spread out into a kingdom and then an empire, which attached other cities and countries. It had a fine literature, and an art of its own, and was envied for its richness and achievements. And a whole branch of its learning was to do with the history, based on legends which persisted, of the old lost city and this particular aspect of its culture was in the hands of a priesthood."[3]

But this city is not four-gated. Later in the novel

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[1] V, 135.

[2] V, 135.

[3] V, 135.

when Martha is trying to get her memory back, she can remember "she had once sat under a tree and looked across the veld and imagined a city shining there in the scrub. An ideal city, full of fountains and flowers. Like Mark's city. Perhaps the same city: but both, after all, were imagined."[1] The word "perhaps" may be key here. It could be that, although Martha helps Mark create "his" city, the two have, or begin to have, different connotations.

Mark's city grows into a collective dream for the future. Elizabeth, the daughter of Mark's dead brother, comes to Mark "demanding the real name and address of his 'City.' She wished to live there. On being informed that 'as he thought should be obvious' it was imaginary, she wrote to ask why he didn't arrange, or make, a similar one. 'And in that case, just let me know and I'll help.'"[2]

Nor is Elizabeth the only one who wants to create a real city out of Mark's imagined one. In a letter to Mark, Mr. Wilhelm Esse Perkins, an American industrialist, says that after reading A City in the Desert he decided he would like to supply the money to build Mark's city, which must be run by an enlightened despot. "They would advertise for applicants for this post in a normal manner, go about it all quite openly and without pulling their punches, and above all, taking their

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[1] V, 206.

[2] V, 438.

time, because clearly, that the despot should be the right man for the job was a key point."[1]

While St. Thomas Aquinas may very well agree that rule by an enlightened despot is the finest form of government, Martha does not, for even while she and Mark were planning the novel, Mark said the city had to have a hierarchy, "which is why she refused even to consider it."[2]

Mark's and Martha's thoughts on an ideal city, then, diverge sharply on this point of government. The ludicrous suggestion of Mr. Perkins about advertising for an enlightened despot almost turns into farce and Martha is not even interested in discussing government. The contrast is another indication that there are two different dream cities being imagined: one by the permanent self--Martha--and the other by the collective self--Mark. It is interesting to note that if these two cities could be combined, even in architectural plan, they would form a mandala of the most perfect kind, reconciling the square and the circle.[3] Behind this implication is a stronger one: if the two cities could indeed be combined, there would most certainly appear the Kingdom of God on Earth, the Pleuroma, Utopia, for there would be a perfected individuality

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[1]V, 551. [2]V, 133.

[3]Aniela Jaffe, "Symbolism in the Visual Arts," in Man and His Symbols, Carl G. Jung et al. (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1964), p. 246.

within a perfect community without need of either one crippling the other.

But Mark's city is doomed to failure. The history of his city, created by the millions of pounds that pour into the project, is commented on in the Appendix through Mark's notes. In spite of the failure to create an ideal city, Mark writes, "All the same I cannot help dreaming of that perfect city, a small exquisite city with gardens and fountains that one might build somewhere with that money."[1] He realizes that the money made Perkins and him prisoners from the start, based on Mark's need "to save and protect--all folly, and hubris."[2] This need to save and protect comes from something deep within Mark's character which led him to try and save first Lynda, then Martha, then Patty Samuels--then, England. But his dream city is never realized and he is left with a feeling of rage and anguish that things happened the way they did.

Apparently the difficulty Mark has with the city is based on his approach to a collective solution. Since the problems are collective, he sees the solutions as collective. One simply reorganizes the world, accepts an enlightened despot, collects enough money and the ideal collective city is supposed to appear, something like a rabbit out of a hat, or a perfect welfare program.

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[1] V, 610.

[2] V, 610.

Martha, however, has used her dream of the ideal city in a different way. It is the shiny vision of a better life for man, free of racism and open to free and generously exchanged emotion, a vision that helps save her from a paralyzing cynicism and perhaps helps her in the final realization that the "answer" lies within. After she reaches this understanding, as she does at the end of the novel, then, in her recounting in the Appendix, we can see how a partial collective solution follows from her own sense of integration. And this is apparently true of the whole group that survives on the island with Martha: "At any rate, on that last morning before our party was picked up off the beach we understood that nearly everyone that came had personal contact with one of us: they had responded because of a personal trust or liking. . . . And some came up and said things like: I've come because I felt this was the right place."[1] It is out of a feeling of mutual trust and liking or intuitive judgment that the survivors come together. And with this common basis, Martha is able to find at the end of her life an island of people who, although confronted with the direst of physical stress, are capable of living in some kind of ideal emotional and intellectual state. This living does not take place in the well-ordered dream city, but on a rough island surrounded by a poisoned sea.

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[1] V, 598.

Martha, because she becomes what she is capable of being, is able to find some kind of partial collective solution. To the extent that her living follows the ideals of her four-gated city dream, she has found what she is looking for. Her dream city has always been a state of being, not a well-worked out collective Utopia.

Mark, because he let himself get sucked into seeking a collective solution, is left with his anguish and rage and sense of failure.

The difference between Martha's dream of a four-gated city and her attendant success and Mark's dream of a non-four-gated city with its failure could possibly be indicated by the fact that their two dream cities never really coincide. Martha, as an adolescent, pictures herself as forced to stand outside the gates to keep the petty-minded out; but Martha as a mature woman knows this posture is unnecessary: only like will be attracted to like on the basis of personal trust and liking. Mark, without any sense of the selectivity that the gates imply wants to save everyone willy-nilly in an impersonal bureaucratic way. He clings to the idea of a collective solution and even during its planning phase castigates Francis for what Mark regards as an "eccentric bit of amateurishness with his compost-loving health-farm friends."[1] What Mark never

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[1]V, 610.

realizes is that this "amateurishness" is really the only solution. The secret to the city, it will be remembered, can not be bought or stolen, it must be earned or accepted as a gift. Everyone must save himself by making the effort of imagination to become what he is capable of being. No one can perform this task for another. Such an attempt to "save and protect" is all "folly and hubris," a fact Mark never really understood in its depth.

The thematic implications of the city should now be clear. Basically the image of the city reinforces the central theme of man's individual relation to the collective, a relationship that insists on personal regeneration as a basis for any collective solution.

This image of the city--especially Martha's city of personal integrity and no alienation--is supported throughout the series by another important image--houses. Mrs. Dorothy Brewster in Doris Lessing wisely and predictively remarked that a critic would do well to examine the use Mrs. Lessing makes of rooms.[1] What Mrs. Brewster says of rooms applies quite appropriately to Mrs. Lessing's use of houses in Children of Violence.

Martha's sense of exile is heightened by the temporary

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[1]Brewster, op.cit., p. 139.

feeling she has everywhere she lives. Her parents' home was a temporary one, poorly constructed, which collapses when they finally move out. The room that Martha rents when she moves into the city is violated immediately by her mother who re-arranges the furniture and the drawers. Both Douglas and Anton buy the furniture for the respective apartments Martha cohabits with each of them. Martha is, of course, as detached from the decorating as the husbands she lives with. The room she rents in between marriages is a horror because of the neurotic land-lady, and the house she fled to arrive there--although spacious and middle-class--is furnished with things that come along with the house. Nowhere in Zambesia does Martha feel truly at home, except in the loft where she and Thomas make love. This becomes her room where Thomas visits her.

Martha's dreams during this period reflect this same sense of exile and rootlessness. The dream she has that warns her of the necessity to hold herself together takes the form of a house with many rooms. Thomas becomes the center of her house and she feels held together. When Martha is anxious about Maisie and Andrew's divorce, Martha dreams that Maisie is about to have her baby and Martha can not find anyone to give her a room for the accouchement.

Significantly enough, the only rooms that Martha dec-orates in the series are in the basement apartment in The Four-Gated City. It is in these quarters that Lynda stays and here

it is that Martha "gets silly" along with Lynda and tunes into the sea of sound.

The whole house on Radlett Street is characterized as a "holding operation," both in terms of its physical upkeep and, more symbolically, in terms of Martha's mind. Mark's map room becomes that part of Martha which deals with politics; the children's rooms are her attempts to deal with the past and the future, and the basement is the emotional foundation, the living roots, whose secrets reveal to Martha where she should look for an answer. When Martha's mind becomes her own, the house is vacated. Martha is a free agent.

What this use of houses in the series implies is the sense of Martha's alienation--not from society or others, but from herself. When she knows her mind and presumably becomes one with the permanent person who has always been inside her, she is no longer alienated, nor is there any need for a continued discussion on rooms or apartments. In fact, after the house is taken over by the government, Martha is quite unconcerned about where she will live. The thematic implications are clear: houses, once used to describe alienation and division, are no longer necessary after Martha has made the effort of imagination to make her capable of becoming what she can be.

What is not discussed at length, but only hinted at in the Appendix, is what precisely the form of a perfected

individuality will take in creating a perfected collectivity. How people will interact with each other, how they will live together, how the new evolutionary powers of the children make communications easier is left vague. We can think of Dostoevsky's The Brothers Karamazov and finish the quotation of the Grand Inquisitor we cited earlier. The Grand Inquisitor says that man will end up in one unanimous and harmonious ant-heap, and then he adds, "for the craving for universal unity is the third and last anguish of man."[1] Man, in seeking for some organizing principle outside himself, is doomed to anguish and the period of isolation that Father Zossima's mysterious visitor told him about. After that period of isolation there will be brotherhood and sharing. Dostoevsky sees this future age in a religious context--indeed Alyosha is regarded as the "future" hero of the novel. While Mrs. Lessing shares no such religious views, her belief in man points to that world of generously and freely shared emotion, one which parallels in feeling, if not in terminology, the way Aloysha deals with those around him.

It is clear, however, that The Four-Gated City predicting as it does even greater tragedy for man on the collective level, with a tightening of authoritarian control and devastating death toll, far outnumbering anything this century has witnessed, spectacular in the history of the world already for its

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[1]Dostoevsky, op.cit., p. 306.

death by violence, should not be compared with Orwell's 1984 or Huxley's Brave New World. This series does not appear to be written in Cassandra-like warnings of the coming Apocalypse for the apocalypse is taken almost casually, and certainly for granted when compared with those two novels so futuristic in the destructive and enslaving use of mass technology. Rather, one should view The Four-Gated City, not as a celebration of man who has gotten himself into this awful mess, but at least as a quiet affirmation in spite of the poisonous sea that appears ready to engulf him.

Some of the critics have missed Mrs. Lessing's use of imagery. For example, D. J. Enright says that one should not look for imagery because it simply is not there.[1] But it is not surprising that imagery is present in the novels of Mrs. Lessing because she sees herself as a realist writer who defines realism as "art which springs so vigorously and naturally from a strongly-held, though not necessarily intellectually-defined, view of life that it absorbs symbolism."[2] Indeed, this chapter with its concentration on a study of imagery hopefully indicates at least partially Mrs. Lessing's use of imagery. Since we have studied only those images with thematic implications we have ignored other images.

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[1]"Shivery Games," New York Review of Books (July 31, 1969), p. 36.

[2]Declaration, p. 14.

To conclude this chapter on imagery, we can look at two critical remarks on Children of Violence. D. J. Enright complains about Mrs. Lessing's "gimmick of the apocalyptic, or the science fictional."[1] Paul West in The Modern Novel has a far broader point to make about art, myth, and the failure of realism:

> Also, because art is art--and not civic documentary or public archives--it will fail in spite of having the worthiest purposes thrust upon it. Snow's Lewis Eliot, like Faulkner's Gavin Stevens and Doris Lessing's Martha Quest, are good ideas that do not quite turn into credible characters. All three are blurred, although for different reasons. The idea of setting them in the Bildungsroman is obviously right; we need a prism that does not refract too much. But, for all their justifiability as presences, they have to exist in the fake world of art; and somehow they are diffused, echoing, and self-parodying. They tell us the kind of thing their authors think the novel should tell us, but that does not justify them aesthetically. If the novelist is a moralist, he should always remember that his honest homilies have to flourish in a world of the contrived and may themselves be taken as no more than exercises in a mode. How much we take in, and how much we take seriously, depends on the power of the novel's illusion; and this point brings me back to myth.
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> For myth, odd and fantastic as it may be, is often more convincing than so-called realism or attempted documentary. If it is going to "make points," moral or otherwise, it will often make them the more forcefully by avoiding "imitation" in favour of a captivating structural metaphor. It is significant that the reaction against flux has prompted novelists to attempt a not very ambitious realism rather than to generalize about life in terms of images born in their imaginations and temperaments.[2]

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[1] Op.cit., p. 37.

[2] Paul West, The Modern Novel, 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1965), p. 54.

Apart from the imagery we have discussed in this chapter, Mrs. Lessing's use of the Apocalyptic or science fictional is not the gimmick that Mr. Enright seems to think. Rather, it is the aura of the prophetic which creates the novelistic illusion at its most powerful and forces the reader to take quite seriously "the point" of the series: the extremely urgent necessity of man as an individual finding himself. These remarks are almost exclusively related to The Four-Gated City, for it is in this novel that destructive and prophetic visions of man attain a mythic quality, without, however, losing their reality as genuine possibilities open to man in this rapidly deteriorating ecological environment we call planet Earth.

We have seen how Children of Violence does have imagery; the dominant images of cities, ants, and houses are related and controlled directly by the thematic purpose of the series. Like our conclusion on plot and character, we now realize that imagery, too, is related directly to the theme of the novel. The next chapter will examine the possibilities for making the case that style, too, is thematically controlled.

CHAPTER V

STYLE AS THEMATIC DEVICE

The technique of the narrator seems to be the most criticized part of Children of Violence. Paul West argues:

> They [C. P. Snow and Anthony Powell] demonstrate it [the limitedness of perception] whereas Doris Lessing, for all her deft, uncompromising and brisk handling of her matter, takes the limitedness upon herself. In one case, the narrators prove the point; in the other, the novelist is subject to it.[1]

The demonstration of the limitedness of perception, however, implies, if not an omniscience, at least an intelligence vaster than the struggling hero's. There is, perhaps, a different rationale behind the rather limited narrational point of view Mrs. Lessing adopts in Children of Violence. What she is doing is closer to Sartre's view of the unreality of the omniscient narrator, for he insists that "the novel consists of action and the novelist has no right to leave the battlefield." In criticizing Mauriac's use of the omniscient narrator, Sartre complains that Mauriac was trying to ignore the fact that "the theory of relativity is wholly applicable to the world of the

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[1]West, op.cit., p. 118.

novel, and that, in a real novel, as in the universe of Einstein, there is no place for the privileged observer."[1]

Let us first examine precisely the narrational technique of Mrs. Lessing in Children of Violence before we evaluate its effectiveness. In the terminology of Wayne C. Booth in The Rhetoric of Fiction, the narrational technique would be characterized as unself-conscious, undramatized, largely uncommenting, supported, reliable, and mostly unprivileged.[2] To begin, we can say the narration is undramatic because it does not emerge as a person, either as an observer or an agent who acts directly in the series. Apart from the epigraphs, the writing is unself-conscious and the narrator is impersonal.

The narrator is uncommenting because there are few times that he will "tell as well as show" what is happening. In fact, these comments are limited exclusively to Martha Quest, the novel in which Martha's adolescent understanding is so limited that the reality of what is happening would be too unilluminating if completely limited to that point of view. For example, when Martha is fifteen years old, she leaves the novel's opening conversation between her mother and Mrs. Van

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[1]Quoted in Philip Thody, Jean-Paul Sartre: A Literary and Political Study (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1960), p. 42.

[2]Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 149-165.

Resnberg to go off and read a book on popular science, whose very title creates a feeling of resentment. Here the narrator takes us beyond the range of Martha's understanding with the comment: "Perhaps, if she could have expressed what she felt, she would have said that the calm factual air of the writing was too distant from the uncomfortable emotions that filled her; perhaps she was so resentful of her surroundings and her parents that the resentment overflowed into everything near her."[1] This particular example is particularly instructive because it speaks of another possible point of view Mrs. Lessing could have used in her series. The "calm factual air of the writing," however, would be repellent to an audience and a heroine coming to grips in a confused and unclear way with its own individual relation to the collective. It would also be assuming an absolutist air which would take the narration hors de combat. Consequently these invidious narrational remarks are very sparsely used even in Martha Quest and then dropped entirely.

The narrator is supported because he is trustworthy. While Martha herself will come to realize how wrong she has been in the past, the narration never has to reverse itself. For example, at the end of A Proper Marriage, Martha tells

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[1] I, 13.

her daughter Caroline that she is being set free because her mother is leaving. The narrator makes no comment whatsoever so that when Martha realizes how wrong she has been about Caroline at the end of Landlocked, the narrator does not have to reverse any earlier erroneous opinions.

A narrator is reliable, according to Wayne C. Booth, when "he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms)," and that "difficult irony is not sufficient to make a narrator unreliable."[1] Although through the process of Martha's growth, she discards old ideas and attitudes and grows into far more mature ones, we are to follow this quest relying on the authenticity of the narrator, for, in the end, it will be Martha's and the narrator's view of the world that the reader is urged to accept.

The narration, then, is third person but with a limited omniscience, for occasionally the narration will leave Martha and follow another character for a brief period of time, thus giving to the narrator powers beyond the scope of Martha Quest. This view is what Wayne C. Booth calls privileged.

In spite of this examination of the terminology used to describe the narration in Children of Violence, we are still

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[1]Booth, op.cit., pp. 158-159.

not close to an understanding of that narrative technique. Since the narration generally follows, supports, and does not anticipate Martha Quest's knowledge of a particular situation at any given time, let us take an example of this kind of narration and see its aesthetic effects in the series.

For example, early in The Four-Gated City, Lynda leaves the sanitarium and moves into the newly decorated basement apartment with her roommate Dorothy Quentin. Apart from the consolation Lynda is able to give Paul, the narrational comment is made: "In short, having Lynda back in the basement, with a friend who had money and would pay some rent, would make a difference to the finances of the household; but not to much else."[1]

The irony of the statement is based on the reader's understanding of the overwhelming importance that Lynda plays in the series, for Lynda being at home finally makes a big difference to Martha's development. What we see in this example is the limited point of view at work, for the narration does not assume a cold factual air and predict, "Little did Martha know . . ."; but it rather contains itself within Martha's limited understanding. The impact of this narrational stance is one of a very painful irony. One thinks of the authorial silence when Martha, after receiving a letter from her mother,

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[1]V, 169.

decides to go through with the disastrous marriage to Douglas; or when Solly Cohen tries to tell Martha about Stalinism and Martha calls him a victim of capitalist propaganda. The reader can appreciate even more fully the impact of such disciplined silence in recalling these scenes when he recalls the wider knowledge and understanding Martha comes to at the end of the series. In fact, the latent content of the series is the wisdom Martha finally attains, and it is against this wisdom that her earlier mistakes are seen most clearly in a painful bas-relief. The fact that the narration does become, as Mr. West has pointed out, subject to the limitedness of Martha's human perception, gives to the series the quality of unsparing irony, never devolving into sentiment or pity.

This limited (with a few exceptions) point of view has definite thematic implications. Wayne C. Booth, in discussing Katherine Ann Porter's "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," says of the point of view: "Clearly a good deal of the poignancy of her [Miranda's] inward cry would be lost if anyone, even an unspecified omniscient narrator, could accompany her on her desperate journey into feverish delirium and near-death. . . . In such a story, then, the isolated heroine can do for herself what no other narrator could possibly do for her."[1]

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[1]Booth, op.cit., pp. 275-276.

This remark applies equally well for Martha Quest. One central theme in Children of Violence is that Martha must finally learn to look inside herself for her answers. The sense of alienation she feels throughout the series from knowing where to look is heightened by the limited point of view the narration takes. If that point of view were shifted to some kind of omniscience, the poignancy and suffering Martha feels, much like Miranda's, would be undercut by a soft lap of an all-knowing narrator there to console the reader and remove his sense of involvement with Martha's struggle to find herself. An omniscient narrator would also imply that self-knowledge does not come from within but rather from the hints or clues some guru or wise teacher can give. The fact that Martha is alone in her search must be underscored by a narrator who limits the point of view to Martha's level of insight; otherwise Martha would not be alone but accompanied by a wiser companion, like Virgil with Dante or Mentor with Telemachus, a situation in direct contradiction to the thematic intention of the series.

There are, however, two stylistic devices through which Mrs. Lessing periodically escapes the limited point of view: analogical juxtaposition and privilege. Let us recall the scene in Martha Quest when Martha has been whirling with the Sports Club set and comes home early in the morning. She

is tired and feels morally exhausted. She was bored during her evening out but knows she will go out again. She walks to the window and watches the file of native prisoners walk by. The narration does not draw any explicit relation between Martha's state of moral exhaustion and the police state mentality she lives within and whose supporters she is dating, but the juxtaposition of thoughts and the political scene outside her window give the reader the cause of the frustration that Martha feels but can not understand. Another example of this kind of juxtaposition is the two dreams Martha has in A Ripple from the Storm. The first is of the island she feels herself an exile from and the second is of the past with the entrapped saurian that needs to be dug out. The connection that Martha can not make here is of the relationship between past and future and the necessity of digging up the pain of the past in order to liberate herself to be open to accept the future.

This technique of analogical juxtaposition is used throughout the series. It is not uncommon to have some kind of collective scene be followed by a scene of personal importance to Martha. Although the narration technically remains limited, the juxtaposition creates possibilities for insight larger than Martha's mind.

A more terminologically accurate use of the transcendence of this limited point of view by privilege--that is, moving

outside of Martha's consciousness into that of another character of situation--is another way Mrs. Lessing uses to underscore thematic implications. The times that this privilege is used in any extended way are few, and we can trace them profitably.

The first and only privilege in Martha Quest recounts the building of the Sports Club. In that discussion the Maynard family figures prominently, and we are introduced to all three of them: Mother, Father, Son. Apart from detailing the history of the club that dominates Martha's social life through the first two volumes, this section also gives us background on the antagonists--the Maynards--so that the interference of Binkie's parents into his love affair with Maisie is well prepared for. The domination of the office boys of capitalism is spelled out on both the individual and the collective levels.

A Proper Marriage also leaves Martha only once, this time to follow Douglas on his way home from the service up North. His childish self-pity at being rejected from service because of his ulcer is stressed, and although Martha is not present at this scene, it reinforces in attitude her decision to leave him and prepares us for what may otherwise appear to be a radical change of character on his part. His bullying refusal to let Martha leave in the following section springs

from that same defect of character which appears so patently sniveling in his interview with the doctor. This closer view into Douglas also precedes the strongest confrontational scene the series affords (Martha leaving Douglas), and following Douglas exclusively beforehand prepares the way for that confrontation.

In A Ripple from the Storm, the novel where Martha's life is at its most frenzied and dullest since she is so completely hidebound to Communism, there are three instances of privilege, apparently made in an effort to break out of the narrowness and repetitiousness of Martha's life during this period--a life of one meeting after another. The three uses of privilege also form a triumvirate of political opinion going from capitalism to socialism to amelioration.

The capitalist use of privilege once again follows the Maynards. Together they discuss Maisie, plan their strategy. Mr. Maynard then confronts her and the two speak to obvious cross purposes since Mr. Maynard is convinced Maisie is out for blackmail. After bungling miserably and sensing a sharp pang of love for his unborn grandchild, with whom Mr. Maynard has just lost any right of contact, he goes to court and proceeds out of bad temper to hand out unusually stiff penalties. The use of force in both his personal and collective life is an object lesson in the way the system works. It also confirms

Athen's analysis of socialist enemies. They will always know the facts about the opposition, but they will never understand socialist intentions. Mr. Maynard is rightly informed about the fact of Maisie's pregnancy, but he can not understand her intention in writing to him.

The next use of privilege follows socialist Jimmy Jones on his unreal night flight to the Location to visit Elias Phiri, brother and comrade. Starting with a dream, the ideology of socialism can not recognize the reality of the present situation, and the dream degenerates into nightmare, as in the Soviet Union, or into preordained failure, as in Zambesia.

But the middle position fails also. Mrs. Van, the Useful Rebel, whose private life and thought becomes the third use of privilege in A Ripple from the Storm, is no prototype of any useful political stance. Because she rules emotion out of her life, she follows legalisms and wins victories within the democratic process, but these victories are pyrrhic and, in the end, she is left almost friendless, suspected by white and black alike.

Since the use of privilege for collective insights and also Martha's search for political solutions end with A Ripple from the Storm, it is not surprising that the uses of privilege in Landlocked and The Four-Gated City are personal, not political. And, since the character with which Martha has

the most difficulty in reconciling herself is her mother, the privilege follows Mrs. Quest twice, once in each novel.

In Landlocked Mrs. Quest's past is revealed through the not uncommon technique of a dream. She dreams of her mother, a beautiful woman, who deserted her daughter by dying while May was still a girl. This beautiful woman hands to her daughter three roses which turn into a medicine bottle. The frustrations of Mrs. Quest's life are examined at their roots, and the reader watches the poor woman come to the realization that what her life has always lacked has been beauty, the beauty of her mother which was always presented to her when she was a child as something faintly immoral. Mrs. Quest, at a far earlier age than Mrs. Van, was shut off from the world of beauty, or perhaps emotion and a nourishing, accepting mother love, and consequently leads a life that becomes more and more sterile, a condition she futilely and destructively rails against.

In The Four-Gated City a section is devoted exclusively to Mrs. Quest. We watch this woman struggle heroically with the dreaded position of visitor in her son and daughter-in-law's home. She works hard and then irrationally feels put upon; her hosts insist she not work, but then she feels put upon once again. Much like the maid in Flaubert's "Un Coeur Simple" whose love at one point in her later life centers around a

canary, Mrs. Quest finds a kind of emotional satisfaction she has never previously known in the simple affection of a native for her. Young Steven gives her high praise when he states quite simply, "You have a black heart, missus, you are my mother."[1] But Steven is a native worker, almost a slave, and responds totally to Mrs. Quest's wishes. Her daughter, for her own salvation, must fight her mother, so Mrs. Quest finds herself continually fretful and contrary in spirit to Martha. It is through Martha that Mrs. Quest releases the rage, pain, and frustration of her entire life and afterwards stands appalled that she was capable of such meanness of spirit.

A summary of the uses of privilege explains their function:

Martha Quest--the building of the Sports Club

A Proper Marriage--Douglas up North

A Ripple from the Storm--the Maynards

--Jimmy Jones on the Location

--Mrs. Van der Bylt's life

Landlocked--Mrs. Quest

The Four-Gated City--Mrs. Quest

In each novel privilege centers around that area--either personal or collective or a combination of both--that Martha is struggling through. The Sports Club dominates the

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[1] V, 246.

atmosphere of the second half of Martha Quest so it is important to learn its history. A Proper Marriage deals with the Knowell relationship so Douglas is followed. A Ripple from the Storm does not center around Martha's relationship with Anton, for it is a marriage almost doomed from the start. Rather it deals with the political struggles and Martha's attempt to find a solution for herself on the collective level. Consequently, the point of privilege is used for the three possible political stances, each of which has its inherent weakness spelled out. Then, the last two novels work toward Martha's quest in finding herself, a goal whose way is blocked by that thick, heavy knot of emotions centering around her mother. Therefore, the two uses of privilege in the last two volumes follow Mrs. Quest.

We can conclude our discussion of point of view by affirming that, with few exceptions, the narrator is limited to Martha's perception, but such a point of view is thematically necessary for the series. Martha must be felt by the reader as alone and unable to turn to anyone else for the answer to her life and sense of identity. Since the answer lies within herself, she must not have an omniscient narrator peeking over her shoulder and prodding her into the path she must take.

This same thematic necessity almost precludes important dramatic confrontation, if by dramatic confrontation one means some kind of clashing of will, motivation, or understanding

between two or more characters. Throughout the novel, there is little or no confrontation between Martha and other characters that leads to important growth for Martha, as, for instance, Creon learns of his unbending pride after his tragic confrontation with the stubborn Antigone. The thematic reason for this absence of dramatic conflict should be obvious; just as the ultimate solution to Martha's quest is inside her, she still goes through patterns of experience presented to her by the accident of environment, but what she learns seems to come from within.

There may be three noticeable exceptions to this lack of confrontation but on closer examination even they are not dramatic. The first is the huge confrontation that Martha Knowell has with her husband, Douglas. Although she has a compromise worked out that could save the marriage, she hardly has an opportunity to express it. But throughout the whole experience and even before it, Martha knew that she would end up leaving him and felt herself to be living through some kind of inevitable role which must be played out by women like her who leave their husbands.

The immediate reasons presented to the reader to account for Martha's leaving Douglas are her exposure to Communism and her desire to have an affair with William. But even more importantly there is another sense about her that

springs from some desire to create a four-gated city, or an earnestness to help liberate man, enchained to indignities that he need not suffer. These dreams and aspirations, we are told, have sprung from her reading of the romantic poets, especially Whitman and Thoreau. What it is that has created this appetite for the acceptance of the romantic message is never clearly explicated, unless it be her sense of parental rejection that forces her into thinking life should not really be lived the way she is forced to live it in her early days. Consequently, Martha's motivation for her actions must be taken, by and large, as a given premise and not something that develops and changes throughout the series. There is a sense of unfolding rather than growth through genuine encounter with other human beings that teaches her what she must know.

But what the scenes with Martha and Douglas--and indeed the whole series--lack in confrontation in the sense that we have defined the term, they make up for in their intensity. Douglas's tremendous excitability and Martha's passive fascination at his reactions combine to make the last part of A Proper Marriage not so much a confrontation but a combustible friction whose reactions upon each character are separate and distinct. It is not through the fighting that Martha makes up her mind about staying or leaving because the decision has been

previously made. Consequently, the scenes that are presented record Douglas going through a series of essentially false emotions and Martha watching them. She is in no fundamental way moved, except to increasing disgust, by Douglas's actions.

There is no confrontation between Anton and Martha when the two separate, and the only argument they have when Martha calls Stalin "Uncle Joe" is negligible. Nor do Thomas Stern and Martha confront each other except in the dialogism that reeks of futility, for how can Martha convince Thomas with words that violence is futile? In fact, except for the books that teach Martha about Communism, psychology, and the occult, words and rational discourse are never persuasive. What persuades is the existential stance she finds herself in when the situation occurs. Or, as Mrs. Mellindip pouring over her tea leaves would cryptically argue, "I can't tell you what you don't already know."

The possibility for confrontation arises again when Mrs. Quest arrives in London. Just like the scenes between Douglas and Martha, the Mrs. Quest arrival is preceded by a section devoted to her. When she arrives, there is a possibility of confrontation, but it does not occur. We watch Mrs. Quest reacting to the London stimuli and to her daughter, but we know that Martha has already worked her way through her angry emotions so she can afford to pity her mother. We watch

them pass each other, but never profoundly touch. The closest they get to real conversation is at the airport terminal when Mrs. Quest says to Martha, "Well, I wonder what that was all about, really?" The interest in the section comes from the tragically painful inability of the two women to speak to and to comfort one another.

The final confrontational possibility arises between Martha and Lynda when Lynda is going through her "silly period," but again, although Lynda becomes petulant when she knows that Martha does not understand something, the two are not confronting each other from opposing wills or ideology; it is simply that Martha does not have the sophistication that Lynda has in going inside herself.

We can not argue that scenes lack dramatic confrontation because Mrs. Lessing as an artist is incapable of writing such scenes. Her short story, "The Black Madonna," for example, is the story of two men, one an Italian and the other a white African Army officer, who confront each other over and over again. "The Antheap" is also another short story of confrontation and growth between the characters.

Rather, the lack of confrontation in the series has definite thematic implications.

Children of Violence has a drama of its own, even though it may lack the kind of dramatic confrontation we find

in a novel like Pride and Prejudice or Strangers and Brothers. What Wayne C. Booth says of Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, "What is dramatized in his [Stephen Dedalus'] mental record of everything that happens,"[1] can be said of Children of Violence. The drama of Martha Quest, a new everywoman, is the age-old one, and the most exciting ever presented to man; the drama is of a human being, in this case a woman, finding out who she is amidst the flux of changing times and situations. Virginia Woolf's The Years, by contrast, is a study of a woman set adrift in a society that never gives her the opportunity for self-fulfillment. The years of duty Miss Pargiter gives to her father are years that necessarily preclude any intense search for self-understanding. That novel also lacks the drama of Children of Violence because while we watch Miss Pargiter live her life, the life she leads never reaches any intense peak from which the reader feels secure that she has found out who she is.

But Martha's self-discovery does not come in a single confrontational incident as it does to proud King Oedipus whose pride forces him into discovery of his real parentage, but rather Martha Quest, living in a far more complex society, must gradually accrete a self-knowledge through a constantly expanding understanding of the society in which she finds herself.

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[1]Booth, op.cit., p. 163.

If there is any general principle to be derived it is that man will know himself only when he understands the nature of his society, and the more complex the society, the more difficult this self-understanding becomes.

But if one starts with a kind of Jungian premise or the premise underlying Children of Violence that the human personality is an innate whole and that the task of each individual is not to grow into something over which he has rational control, but rather a task which is to unfold his innate personality, then the unfolding in its literary expression, as we have seen in Children of Violence, will become one filled with emotional intensity but not dramatic confrontation. For what a person has to learn that is fundamental to his development is what he can learn from within; how the world acts upon him becomes accidental, chimerical, and relatively unimportant. One's knowledge of society becomes the way that one learns to separate out what is false in his life and personality from what is real and genuine, that is, innate.

So long as one continues in ignorance about his society, one risks getting caught up in patterns of behavior that have nothing to do with the real self. Consequently, the necessity of understanding society fulfills a negative adjunct: one must understand society in order to understand

what it is that one is not. For the positive exploration of the depths of reality, the depths of one's genuine personality, one must travel further and further inside the looking-glass world of the self.

We can see this trend of thinking being developed further in Mrs. Lessing's next novel, Briefing for a Descent into Hell. The bulk of the novel is about the psychotic voyage of a man who has lost his memory and, at the end, when he leaves the hospital, his return to the "real" world is viewed as some kind of unhappy ending.[1] The seeds for this view are present in Children of Violence.

But the subjective experiences of Martha Quest, reflected by the limited point of narrational view and by the lack of dramatic confrontation, have a balance point of opposition in a conception of society that is broad and all-encompassing. In discussing Children of Violence, Mrs. Lessing has said: "One third of us, one-third of humanity, that is, is adequately housed and fed. Consciously or unconsciously we keep two-thirds of humanity improperly housed and fed. This is what the series of novels [Children of Violence] is about--this whole pattern of discrimination and tyranny and violence."[2]

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[1]Studs Terkel interview, October 1970.

[2]Counterpoint, p. 423.

The world Martha Quest lives in is one which has open windows on the kinds of problems the majority of the well-fed and well-housed would prefer not to face. Even on the veld, Martha can see a native child and react to him as a person, one whose life will be undoubtedly crippled by prejudice so that he will never have an opportunity to become himself. Throughout the series, this sense of suffering mankind creates the atmosphere for Martha's life. In town she watches the native prisoners being led handcuffed to prison for trivial and legalistic crimes. During her marriage she has an uneasy relationship with her servants because she is aware of the pattern of discrimination involved in their roles. During the communist phase, her sense of the pattern of racial discrimination continues. And through Thomas and her increasing awareness of the brutality of the war, she learns and suffers with the ravaged peoples of the earth. In The Four-Gated City, Martha learns about the bomb and the possible devastation which can be wreaked, like a fifth horse in the Apocalypse, by chemical and biological poison.

By contrast, we think of Anthony Powell's Music of Time series. There Nicholas Jenkins's world seems to be as limited as Henry Matheson's, the upper class lawyer who meets Martha in London. In Powell's The Acceptance World, for example, Nicholas is at a class reunion where Widmerpool, one

of his classmates, gets up to make a speech. It is regarded as rather shocking that this man, not a member of parliament or an important governmental figure, speaks. After the dinner Nicholas and Widmerpool take home a third classmate, Stringham, and wrestle him into bed, for he is hopelessly drunk. Widmerpool makes some comment on Stringham's drinking, but the first person narration of Nicholas comments: "I did not answer, largely because I was thinking of other matters: chiefly of how strange a thing it was that I myself should have been engaged in a physical conflict designed to restrict Stringham's movements: a conflict in which the moving spirit had been Widmerpool. That suggested a whole social upheaval: a positively cosmic change in life's system."[1]

One is appreciative for Mr. Powell's miniscule examination of his particular sect, that is, the British upper middle class, but one also misses any sense of perspective or realization that the world is much larger than the English public school alumni list. Such a narrow context for the universe may have advantages of sorts, like limiting one's writing to what one knows, but it lacks the broader context that is found in the Martha Quest series. For example, when Graham Patten thinks times are changing because men from the provinces can

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[1]Anthony Powell, The Acceptance World (London: William Heineman Ltd., 1955), p. 209. Italics: mine.

make it in London, Mrs. Lessing comments that this limited upward mobility has always been the case. She is quite obviously speaking out of a world view that sees minor shifts in upper class mores as quite insignificant for the rest of mankind--a view more proportionally just than Nicholas's parochial sense of "cosmic change."

Georg Lukacs remarks of great realists:

> In the works of a great realist everything is linked up with everything else. Each phenomenon shows the polyphony of many components, the intertwinement of the individual and social, of the physical and the psychical, of private interest and public affairs. And because the polyphony of their composition goes beyond immediacy, their dramatis personae are too numerous to find room on the playbill.
>
> The great realists always regard society from the viewpoint of a living and moving centre and this centre is present, visibly or invisibly, in every phenomenon.[1]

Lukacs points out that for Balzac the living and moving center is financial capital which stood ready to take over France at the time Balzac was writing. And for Tolstoy the living, moving center, visible or invisible, was the Russian peasantry. There seems to be no large center for Powell's Music of Time, we might add.

But for Doris Lessing, this Lukacs criterion of realism well applies. Her series moves with a spirit of the unfortunate in the world: the hungry, the black, the poor from all countries and nations. It is this center which prompts Martha

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[1]European Realism, p. 145.

Quest to tell Henry Matheson that he is spending on the dinner more than most poor English families spend on food in a week. The consciousness of Martha Quest centers on her awareness of the injustice in the world. Whatever her occupation, her love, her interest, her relation with others hinges directly on the awareness of a world in need and in change.

This awareness of the central problem of our age--how to distribute the fruits of our technology with some kind of equity and how to save the world from blowing itself up--gives the series a broad scope. This widespread canvass imbued with a vital moral question becomes the opposite and balancing point of the limited narrational point of view. In Children of Violence we get a style that blends the individual and the collective. The narrational point of view is limited to Martha Quest's consciousness, but the sweep of the series and the moral center is in the context of world-wide problems. Mrs. Lessing becomes a realist in the tradition of her favorite writers: Tolstoy, Balzac, Stendhal.

There is one syntactical device we should mention before concluding this chapter on style. Mrs. Lessing's sentences will occasionally consist of redefinitions which make the familiar be seen in a new light. For example, when Martha Quest is asking Mr. Baker for work, he sees her as a girl of a good type, that is, middle class. The shift of judgment from

the socio-moral to the economic gives the reader a new sense of perspective which is in keeping with the thematic intention of the series, for such a style attempts to break down the compartmentalization of thinking in man's mind. Or when Mr. Quest is on his deathbed dying he asks the question, "Funny thing, laughing. . . . What's laughing for?"[1] Laughter remains undefined until The Four-Gated City:

> Laughter was the noises made by the species in the street when they needed to fit together two forms of fact or information that were different from each other, of different substances from each other; for their brains were so compartmented that their organisms were always being thrown off balance by having to take in, or at least to handle, two or three different kinds of fact at once, for which they were inadequately adapted. That was laughter: a kind of balancing mechanism, a shock absorber.[2]

It is this breaking down of categories and realigning of supposedly unrelated facts that becomes a key exercise Martha must perform in order to become herself. When Jack Dobie asks her to sleep with him, he thinks he will give her an experience the likes of which she has never had before. The narrator concludes: "In short, this scene of modern gallantry was running its usual course."[3] Such juxtapositions are always illuminating. For example, when Martha is still a girl living at home, her mother prays: "Please help me to save her," and the real meaning of that phrase turns into,

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[1] IV, 502.

[2] V, 483-484.

[3] IV, 422.

"Please let her be like her brother."[1] Juxtaposition of perception indicates the various levels of awareness that exist within a society, as, for example, when the year 1956 is being discussed in terms of Hungary and Suez: "Harold Butts, for instance, tended to say things like: 'That was the year the marjoram did so well'; and Iris across the river would say: 'Let me see, that was the year we got that new bit of carpet in the front room.'"[2] Or in discussion of the way Rita was brought up in Zambesia, the narrator comments that she lived in a town of "five thousand white inhabitants every one of whom she knew by sight or by name, and a hundred thousand black inhabitants, whom she never saw at all."[3]

Whether the juxtaposition be between two supposedly unrelated facts, between what is said and what is meant, between the understanding of a character and the reality of a situation, such a syntactical device opens up for the reader new ways of perceiving the human personality and the highly complicated society in which one lives.

Needless to say, such insights are clearly related to the theme of the series.

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[1] I, 69.

[2] V, 277.

[3] V, 541.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

If there is any single conclusion to draw from this dissertation it is that plot structure, character, imagery, and style of the series are all directly related to and informed by the stated thematic intention of the series, but we should not close without a comment on the significance of the title, Children of Violence.

Mrs. Lessing said she decided on the title of her series years before the word "violence" became the slogan it is today.[1] But slogan the word is today and one of the major problems facing this country, both in its foreign and domestic policies, and in most of the other countries of the world as well.

The problem of violence has brought in its wake investigations, studies, and attempts of all sorts to discuss the nature of violence and possible solutions to the problem. Men like Robert Audrey in African Genesis and Konrad Lorenz in On Aggression both seem to argue that violence is inherent in

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[1]Studs Terkel interview, May 1969.

the nature of man, a nature inherited from and sharing in some fundamental ways characteristics of aggressive mammals. Or Sigmund Freud in Civilization and Its Discontents argues that the civilized times give man no legitimate outlet for his hostilities which will consequently break out in an increasing amount of violence.

But the way we think about a problem has a kind of inherent self-fulfilling aspect to it. If we conclude that man is violent or that his hostilities demand violent expression, then this conduct will be in part attributable to the very works whose arguments predict such conduct.

What man thinks about becomes real.

But Mrs. Lessing's analysis of violence deserves very special attention simply because it argues that violence is not inherent, necessary, or vital to the conduct of man's business.

Her basic argument about violence is implicit throughout Children of Violence. Only once does Martha explicitly state that she does not "believe" in violence.

The series is clearly not a polemic on pacifism, but rather it is a fictional search for truth, much like Gandhi's factual autobiography.

And the truth is that violence is not human.[1]

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[1]There is nothing in Mrs. Lessing's point of view that sees man as fallen.

Violence occurs because man, not knowing who he is, gets caught up in patterns of behavior that erroneously sees violence as a solution to some problem or other. On the personal level, Thomas Stern was looking for an expression of his anger over man's inhumanity to man. But his shooting of the British officer did not in any way allay his anger of frustration. On the collective level, the violence went on to continue an unwarranted use of power by the white man in Zambesia. World War II exploded in a way that man did not have control over, or predict, or even imagine. It erupted as a boil erupts on a body.

But the man who fulfills the Delphic command does not need violence. He recognizes it as a pattern he can get involved in, but that pattern of behavior necessarily does not express his truest self, merely what it is he is confusing for his true self.

Abraham Maslow, a humanist psychologist, seems to agree with Doris Lessing's attitude on man. He posits basic assumptions that will remind us of Martha Quest:

> 1. We have, each of us, an essential biologically based inner nature, which is to some degree "natural," intrinsic, given, and, in a certain limited sense, unchangeable, or, at least, unchanging.
> 2. Each person's inner nature is in part unique to himself and in part species-wide.
> 3. It is possible to study this inner nature scientifically and to discover what it is like--(not <u>invent</u>--<u>discover</u>).

> 4. This inner nature, as much as we know of it so far, seems not to be intrinsically or primarily or necessarily evil. The basic needs (for life, for safety and security, for belongingness and affection, for respect and self-respect, and for self-actualization), the basic human emotions and the basic human capacities are on their face either neutral, pre-moral or positively "good." Destructiveness, sadism, cruelty, malice, etc., seem so far to be not intrinsic but rather they seem to be violent reactions against frustration of our intrinsic needs, emotions and capacities.[1]

The permanent self that Martha searches for and finds is that part of her that is intrinsic, unchangeable. The times in her life when she most punished herself were the times when her inner nature was the most frustrated. If we can extend this private life of Martha Quest into some generalization, we can argue that violence in man only comes as a reaction against frustration of inner needs, emotions, and capacities.

We can see Children of Violence as an exhaustive study both of the disease and the cure. Martha Quest, as an individual, relates to the collective. After working through the patterns of thought and behavior in capitalism and socialism, she becomes attuned to her permanent self. She is capable of living a nonalienated, nonhypnotized life, one that precludes violence.

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[1]Abraham Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being (Princeton: Insight Book, 1968), p. 3.

Mrs. Lessing has called this series a Bildungsroman and a brief examination of the genre will further clarify Mrs. Lessing's position on violence.

Francois Jost argues that the nature of the Bildungsroman (generally regarded as the story of a young person growing into maturity being influenced chiefly by the society in which he finds himself developing) as "peut donc etre défini comme l'éxpression litteraire d'un nouvel ideal d'éducation."[1] This educational ideal is heuristic and implies that the individual can solve his own problems and educate himself simply by reacting to the situations in which he finds himself. Children of Violence fits this definition of the Bildungsroman. The very nature of the genre seems to be quite positive; that is, it has faith that the individual has something within him which will let him arrive at a maturity most appropriate for himself. In the case of Martha Quest, this "maturity" is an awareness of her permanent self.

But the Bildungsroman also has a special social significance. In discussing the social significance of Thomas Mann's The Magic Mountain, Roy Pascal says:

> All the Bildungsroman were written in the aftermath of revolution and social turmoil, and all make a reckoning

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[1]Francois Jost, "La Tradition du Bildungsroman," p. 113.

> with the principles of social life. It is their distinction that the intricate processes of personal development are guided by principles of social conduct. In Goethe these principles, influenced by the French Revolution, have a Utopian character, and lead his "renunciants" out of Germany. In Keller the reformed constitution of his Swiss republic gives his hero the solid ground he needs for an active social life. Stifler, repelled by the revolutionary liberalism of his day, made the family the bias from which social improvement might come. Mann's hero finds a far less secure anchorage. Among the bewildering experiences of the sanitarium Castorp gains, not real allies and companions, not a job or a home, but only an attitude of mind. He enters a world infinitely more bewildering than that awaiting the other heroes of the Bildungsroman more acutely threatened, much less amenable to rational decision; and his author is much less sure about the outcome.[1]

The principle seems to be that the more complex the society with which the Bildungsroman hero has to come to terms, the vaguer and less rational the response will be. Martha Quest, whose world is even more perilous and complex than Hans Castorp's in 1924, the year The Magic Mountain was published, is confronted by a society in such grave danger of harm that her response is even vaguer than Castorp's. She is forced into a retreat that becomes successively more and more interior. There is no home, no job, no family, no marriage, no place for her even to live at the end of the series. She has learned a way of communicating that even eliminates the necessary social contact of having the other person present. She "talks" to

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[1]Roy Pascal, The German Novel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1956), p. 97.

her Canadian trapper because they both share the same values. We can talk about alienated society and alienated man, but it is frightening to consider that Doris Lessing's solution lies so deeply within the individual that a social order or value of any kind must necessarily be dropped. The only hint of a collective solution comes in the hope of the evolution of a higher man whose powers for understanding will surpass the limited powers of man today.

But inherent in the presentation of the problem through the choice of the Bildungsroman is the possibility of that very solution. Man does have within him the powers necessary to make the adjustment to society that is most needed. Man has the infinite capacity to grow in the understanding of that ancient truth that all men are brothers. And hopefully he will have the strength to make the effort of imagination needed to keep him from blowing his world sky high. At its very least, Children of Violence will reflect the concern some citizens (especially the younger ones) feel about the state of world affairs; at its best, it will be regarded as part of a larger turning-point in the development of man; and at its worst, it will not make one damn bit of difference.

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